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NEWSZINE

RPGA®

NETWORK

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With Great Power

Campaign Construction, Part I:

by Dale A. Donovan

Since I began writing this column in issue #63, I've discussed new directions for your MARVEL SUPER HEROES campaigns.

Now it's time to address building a super hero campaign from scratch. Starting with this column, I'll cover the elements needed for a successful campaign. I've got enough topics for several columns, but I want your input, too. I want to hear what you think is important to a good campaign. Send your ideas to:

With Great Power
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The most important aspect of any role playing campaign is the player characters. In the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, you can play either pregenerated Marvel heroes or you can create your own using the character generation systems in the rules.

Detailed below is a "purchasing" system inspired by the other two major super hero role-playing games on the market, *DC Heroes* by Mayfair Games and *Champions* by Hero Games.

Using my system, the Character Point (CP) System, players can build their ideal heroes within limits set by the Game Master. This system is flexible, so GMs should be wary of canny players who seek to take advantage of that flexibility.

Character Point System

The MARVEL SUPER HEROES *Advanced Set* Players' Book, page 5, details the steps players should follow to create their own heroes. It is reproduced with minor modifications below:

- Create an origin
- Determine primary abilities (FASERIP)
- Determine secondary abilities (Health, Karma, etc.)
- Ascertain special abilities (powers, talents, and contacts)
- Fill in the blanks (hero and character names, background, etc.)

Origin

The Players' Book suggests you start with an origin for your hero. However, I recommend you decide which type of hero your PC will be (altered human, mutant, etc.), then create the origin. Be sure to note all the special aspects of each type of character *except* which column of the "Generating Primary Abilities" table the hero's abilities will be rolled on. You will not be using dice to determine your hero's abilities.

Do not feel compelled to fully detail your hero at this point. Save that for the "Fill in the Blanks" stage.

Determine primary abilities

Each player will now be given a number of Character Points (CPs). This number is determined by the Game Master and can range from 200 to 500 CPs or more. Let's say your GM gives you 300 CPs to build your hero. You would now "buy" your primary abilities (FASERIP) by spending CPs.

Purchase primary ability scores on a point-for-point basis. So if you want your character to possess Amazing (50) Strength, subtract 50 CPs from your point total. Do this for all seven primary abilities.

You can purchase ability scores other than the normal rank number in each rank. (For example, you could buy Amazing (46) Strength instead of Amazing (50) and save four CPs to use later.) Just remember any skimping like this will be reflected in your final Health and Karma scores.

Don't be too extravagant with your spending here, as your CPs will also be used to purchase your Resources level, powers, talents, and contacts. I don't recommend spending more than about half of your CPs at this stage.

Determine secondary abilities

Total up your Health and Karma points. Add those two figures together and they should equal the number of CPs you've spent so far. This is a good way to check your math.

Now buy your hero's Resources rank by spending two CPs for every point of Resources. (If you want Excellent (20) Resources, it would cost you 40 CPs.)

A player does not buy and cannot modify his hero's Popularity score, as it is a function of the hero's origin and the public's perception of the hero.

Determine special abilities

Since each special ability (powers, talents, and contacts) is purchased slightly differently, each is discussed separately.

Powers: Each hero now buys powers *and* their ranks. All powers, except those with stars, cost 10 CPs each, and starred powers cost 20 CPs. Purchasing powers gives the hero the ability to buy ranks in those powers. Ranks for powers without stars are purchased on a point-for-point basis, as with the primary abilities. (If you wanted to buy the Flight power, it would cost 10 CPs. You can now buy a power rank for that power. Let's say you wanted to fly at Excellent (20) speed, it would cost you 20 more CPs. So buying the Flight power and an Excellent (20) rank cost you a total of 30 CPs.) Starred powers, because they are more powerful or more rare, each cost 20 CPs, as noted above, and their ranks are bought at a rate of two CPs for each rank number.

You purchase both powers and ranks so that five powers, each at Good (10) rank, will be more expensive than one power at Amazing (50) rank. The hero with five powers is much more versatile, and he should pay for that.

Limitations: Page 9 of the Players' Book gives a list of possible limitations for powers. Players can buy *one* limitation per hero to gain more CPs. Use the maximums listed at the top of each list of limitations on page 9. This determines the number of CPs gained from taking a limitation. For example, taking the limitation "Power can only be used three times/day" from the list "Maximum of Excellent" for your Flight power would gain you an additional 20 CPs, as it is an Excellent rank limitation.

Points gained through limitations are the normal rank numbers for that rank only. All normal rules regarding limitations apply. Subtract all CPs spent on powers and ranks, and add any CPs from limitations to figure your hero's new point total.

Talents: All skills listed under the Weapon, Fighting, and Mystical or

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Friendly native or savage foe? Its all up to the GM when spacefaring PCs make planetfall. This issue's installment of *The Living Galaxy* discusses some of the options. Art by Scott Rosema.

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NEWSZINE

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Notes From HQ

Boxes, Little Boxes

I am reminded of an old song that goes something like, *"Boxes, little boxes. Boxes made of ticky tacky. Boxes, little boxes. And they all look just the same."*

That's what the Network staff is surrounded by—boxes. Little boxes. Big boxes. Cardboard boxes. Ripped boxes. Heavy boxes. Boxes stacked on boxes stacked on boxes stacked on boxes.

We've moved. And it will be *at least* a month before we unpack because of POLYHEDRON® Newszine deadlines and continuing construction.

We didn't move far. We're still in the TSR building in Lake Geneva. We're just in a different spot. We have offices instead of cubicles. They have real doors. And they'll have skylights and carpet, too—as soon as the construction is finished.

We're happy with our new location. We're just having a little trouble dealing with all the boxes and the stifling odor of paint and varnish—and the occasional sound of a buzzsaw. So if you call or write asking for a particular grain of Network knowledge, be patient. That information is in a box.

A few Regional Directors benefitted by our move. Since we didn't want to move the prizes we had stored, we boxed them up and sent them toward the east coast. The boxes were filled with games, modules, paperback books, old Newszines, back issues of DRAGON® Magazine, and who-knows-what-else. Now those lucky Regional Directors will have to deal with boxes until they attend conventions and give away tournament prizes.

Score Sheets

Score sheets from tournaments were among the papers we boxed and moved. As we were doing so we noticed that players and judges are getting increasingly lax about listing their Network membership numbers.

Only RPGA Network members are awarded points from tournaments.

If you play in a tournament, indicate on your score sheet that you are a Network member. If you don't, you won't get points.

There is a line on the score sheet that says: **Membership #.** It appears just underneath the line that says: **Name.**

Either put your membership number on the line, state that you are a member (and just can't remember your number), or state that you are in the process of joining or renewing.

If there is nothing on that **Membership #** line of your score sheet, you will not be awarded points. We do not have the man hours to take every sheet with an empty Membership # line and search the computer to see if the player or judge is a member. So, don't forget—fill in the blanks!

Dreaded Deadlines

The Network has deadlines. Deadlines to get tournament requests in for conventions. Deadlines to get announcements in the Newszine. Deadlines to submit tournaments for specific conventions, including for the GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ Game Fair.

Several authors have asked us why their tournaments were not considered for this year's Game Fair. Sometimes events are not scheduled because they are too similar to something we've already selected. Sometimes events are passed over because they did not meet our deadline.

In the past we've been quite lenient about our January tournament deadline for the Game Fair. No longer!

This year the RPGA Network took on the pre-registration brochure: writing the basic copy, laying it out, pestering other people in TSR and the industry to make the deadlines, etc. Our work on the pre-registration brochure started in December. And, since we want to list the names of our tournaments in the brochure, we had to pick our Game Fair tournaments early.

We can no longer risk scheduling tournaments based on what our veteran authors are working on. We've tried that in the past, and sometimes our authors are not able to come through even when their deadlines are extended far into the summer. You'll know what we mean if you look at the 1991 pre-registration brochure vs. the on-site brochure. Some tournaments changed names. That was because tournaments we were expecting did not come in.

We will only schedule Game Fair tournaments based on what we have in our hands in early January. That might sound hard-nosed. But it benefits the authors who submit on time, and it benefits the Network because we can better publicize the events.

Tournament Authors

A tournament author and friend has pointed out to me on numerous occasions that the Network does not do enough for authors.

He's right. To be honest, we've just been so busy that we haven't had the time to come up with some type of reward. We're still busy, but the rewards are overdue.

It is the authors who enable us to offer an international tournament program. Without their scenarios players could not compete in Network-sanctioned events. The authors also provide the featured adventures that appear in the Newszine. For example, *Experience Preferred* in this issue was a three-round tournament that ran at conventions throughout the world.

We don't recognize authors the way we should. But we don't have the space in the Newszine to list who authored which scenarios at specific conventions. We mention our authors publicly at the Game Fair and at the WINTER FANTASY™ convention. We hope other convention coordinators do the same.

Effective now, authors will receive a Certificate of Merit for each scenario accepted for use in the Network's tournament program. Further, they will receive a $10 gift certificate from the Mail Order Hobby Shop for each round they write. For example, a one-round tournament nets a $10 gift certificate, while a three-round tournament nets a $30 gift certificate. If there are co-authors, they split the certificate.

Further, we will recognize scenario authors who have contributed to the Network from its inception. During the next year, the network's most prolific tournament authors will receive commendations and testemonials.

Tournament Voting Forms

We've just reordered oodles and oodles of packets of tournament voting forms (which we do every year it seems). These will look a little different than

the previous ones. These forms say you cannot vote for yourself in Network tournaments.

We've made this move because during the past few years we have been deluged by players and judges requesting it. We've been hounded at conventions, barraged at membership meetings, and inundated by mail.

We've listened. We'll give it a try.

These forms will be used starting at the Game Fair (because that's about the time the old forms will run out).

Let us know what you think.

Classified Ads

In an effort to be timely, we are shaving the amount of time needed to submit classified ads to the Newszine. We can now accept classified ads three months in advance of an issue.

This is possible because of our wonderful laser printer and our IBM compatible computers. Of course, to do this, classifieds will be appearing on the Mailer Cover of the magazine.

This means you will get a quicker response to your advertisements!

Rats!

Attention all gamers who like to paint miniatures. Consider entering the *Renegade Rats* tournament at the Game Fair. All participants will receive a free miniature of their character.

In addition, the top scorer from the tournament will receive a $125 gift certificate from Ral Partha. That will buy a lot of miniatures!

Membership Drive

The insert in this issue has two membership forms—a family form and an individual form. Make lots and lots and lots of copies of them and give them to your friends. Copies of U.K. and Australian membership drive forms are available from those branch offices.

It's recruitment time again, and if everyone pitches in and helps, the Network will swell at the seams!

You know the spiel—and it's very true—the more members we have, the greater our resources and the more activities, programs, and prizes we can offer.

Everyone who participates in this membership drive is a winner!

RULES: Photocopy the membership forms, put your name and membership number in the recruiter information box. Pass out the membership forms to your friends. Tell them about Network activities, tournaments, and the POLYHEDRON® Newszine. Encourage them to join! **Do not** collect money and forms. It is solely up to prospective members to send those in to Network HQ or the Australian or U.K. branch. We will keep track of how many members you recruit based on the number of forms that come in with your name and membership number in the recruiter information box.

TIME: The membership drive runs from now until July 23, 1992.

PRIZES: For each individual or family you recruit, you will receive a $2 gift certificate to the Mail Order Hobby Shop. That means if you recruit 10 members, you will get a $20 certificate, and if you recruit 100, you will get a $200 gift certificate.

In addition, if you:

- Recruit 10 members you will receive a one-year membership extension.
- Recruit 20 members you will receive a two-year membership extension.
- Recruit 30 members you will receive a five-year membership extension.

Grand Prize—the individual who recruits the most members from throughout the world will receive a black-and-white, half-page original piece of art from the AD&D® 2nd Edition game module *Nightwatch In The Living City*. The work is by famed science fiction and fantasy artist Kevin Ward. Kevin is himself a member of the Network. His artistic talent is clearly visible throughout that module, in issues of the Newszine, DRAGON® Magazine, and DUNGEON® Adventures. The cover of a future POLYHEDRON® Newszine is expertly rendered by him, too.

Take Care,
Jean ❑

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The Living City

Swimming Lessons

by Tim Beach

"Dive Right In," the advertisement reads. "The Water Is Just Fine."

At the docks of Ravens Bluff, humans and demi-humans of all backgrounds wade into The Dragon Reach and take swimming lessons from the beautiful Milissa and other instructors.

It takes four weeks of lessons, and 10 gold pieces in fees, to acquire the basic swimming proficiency. Each lesson lasts two hours, and a student attends sessions three times a week.

A character enrolled in basic swimming lessons learns one stroke—either the crawl, breast stroke or side stroke. In addition, he or she learns techniques such as breath-holding, diving and treading water.

Characters who already have the swimming proficiency can improve their skills. For every two weeks (and 10 gold spent), they learn an additional swimming stroke and increase their swimming proficiency by one point, to a maximum of 20.

The instructors also teach the advanced swimming proficiency, which requires the character to be a proficient swimmer already and costs one additional proficiency slot. Characters with this advanced proficiency receive a +1 bonus to all Constitution checks when swimming long distances. Penalties to Strength, Constitution, and attack rolls take twice as long to accumulate for the advanced swimmer (see PHB, pages 120-121). Characters can also learn an additional swimming stroke, usually the back stroke or back crawl.

Advanced swimmers learn better methods of treading water and disrobing in water. If a character with this proficiency makes a successful Strength check and a successful Constitution check, he or she can tread water while taking off armor.

Finally, an advanced swimmer learns how to make shallow entries into the water. This means that if the character is unencumbered, he or she can dive safely (with a successful swimming proficiency check) into water only half the swimmer's height. The character in the water also can (again, with a successful proficiency check) jump from up to three feet above the water, and keep his head out of the water on landing.

New swimming students can choose any of the instructors.

Milissa

5th Level Female Human Specialty Priestess of Eldath

STR: 16
INT: 13
WIS: 15
DEX: 15
CON: 13
CHA: 18

AC Normal: 9
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 29
Alignment: Neutral
Languages: Common, Elvish
THAC0: 18

Age: 22
Height: 5'4"
Weight: 120 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Blond/Blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, sling, club
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Swimming (17), advanced swimming, healing (13), weather sense (14)

Spells/day: 5, 4, 1
Major Spheres: All, Astral, Charm, Divination, Elemental (water-aspected spells only), Healing, Protection, Sun
Minor Spheres: Animal, Plant
Special Abilities: In combat, Milissa can parry, subtracting 1d6 from an attacker's roll to hit. This ability is lost for the remainder of the battle if she attacks. In addition, Milissa can use any priest spells of the enchantment/charm type, regardless of sphere. She can cast *remove fear, sleep,* and *silence, 15' radius* each once per day in addition to normal spells.

Milissa is a stunning woman, with piercing eyes and lightly tanned skin. Her hair flows to just past her shoulders. She frequently wears several flowing, sheer robes in shades of blue and green. For swimming lessons, however, she dons a skimpy outfit of the same hues.

Born into one of the noble landowning families near Ravens Bluff, Milissa apprenticed to the church of Eldath at an early age. When she became a full-fledged priest, she joined an adventuring group and decided to travel and preach for peace. The violent ways of the other adventurers disgusted her, and though she was forced into combat only rarely, it was far too often for her tastes. She quit adventuring after a fairly short time, returning home.

As a Peacewoman of Eldath, she never initiates a battle, fighting only in defense of herself and her companions. She enjoys speaking Eldath's words while at the seashore.

Following one of her sermons nearly a year ago, a young couple asked her to teach them to swim. She readily agreed, and the number of pupils grew as word of her talents spread. Later, a friend, Morris, also wearied of adventuring. He joined her and convinced her to turn the swimming lessons into a part-time business. Half the proceeds of the business are saved to build a temple of Eldath not far from the harbor.

Milissa begins each of her lessons with a short sermon on pacifism and the wonders of water.

Morris

3rd Level Male Human Ranger

STR: 17
INT: 14
WIS: 14
DEX: 14
CON: 16
CHA: 14

AC Normal: 8 (5)
AC Rear: 10 (5)
Hit Points: 22
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Gnomish, Dwarven
THAC0: 18

Age: 22
Height: 5'11"
Weight: 160 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Green/Brown
Weapon Proficiencies: Stiletto, sabre, bolas, net, lasso
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Tracking (15), etiquette (14)*, tumbling (14)*, swimming (17), advanced swimming, seamanship (15), ancient history (13), religion (14)

Ranger Abilities: Fight with two weapons without penalties if lightly armored. Hide in Shadows in Natural Surroundings 20%; Move Silently in Natural Surroundings 27%; +4 to hit lizard men; −4 penalty to reactions to lizard men; animal empathy

* Bonus proficiencies from a modified swashbuckler kit from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook.*

Morris is a tall, handsome man with tanned skin. His face is very expressive, almost theatrical in its countenances. Though he possesses a suit of chain mail, he dons it rarely. When giving swim lessons, he wears only a pair of ragged trousers, cut off above the knees.

Morris was born of a wealthy Procampur family and began adventuring early for excitement and fun. During his youth, he took several ocean voyages.

After a time, he found that adventuring was not all that much fun, especially when it involved killing others and becoming painfully injured himself. Though not afraid of fighting (the occasional scar made him appear more dashing, and made exceptional fodder for stories), he is a peace-lover at heart.

During a stop in Ravens Bluff, he met Milissa—and took a great liking to her and her philosophy. He decided to stay in the city and join in her swimming lessons.

Because of her preachings, he began fighting with a defensive style.

Deena

1st Level Female Human Mystic Enchanter

STR: 17
INT: 16
WIS: 13
DEX: 17
CON: 10
CHA: 15

AC Normal: 7
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 4
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Merman
THAC0: 20

Height: 5' 9"
Weight: 150 lbs.
Age: 19
Hair/Eyes: Dark brown/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Sling
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Astrology (16), religion (13), dancing (17), swimming (20), advanced swimming
Spells/day: 1

Special Abilities: Once each week, Deena can *feign death* as the 3rd level wizard spell, for up to 24 hours. Further, she can leave her body in spirit form, with a flying rate of 24 (MC: B), and ability to move through any opening. She can also *levitate* for up to one hour.

Spell Book
Level 1: *Cantrip, charm person, read magic, sleep*

Deena is a muscular young woman, with straight, shoulder-length hair and large eyes. She almost always wears a tranquil smile. Most of the time, Deena wears a short, spotless white robe. For swimming lessons, she wears a modest one-piece outfit of white or peach.

Born in Ravens Bluff, Deena served her magical apprenticeship in the city. Long a follower of Eldath, she has been friends with Milissa for several years. She only recently joined the swimming business—after she excelled at the lessons she received from Milissa.

Like her friends, Deena is a pacifist, using a weapon only in emergencies and for self-defense. She meditates every day, the first two hours after dawn, to insure the continuance of her mystic powers.

Adventure Idea

One of the PCs is encouraged to learn how to swim.

During a class, an instructor is captured by sahuagin, merrow, or an amorous mermaid/merman. The other instructors are helpless, as they have no way of breathing underwater.

The kidnappers take the instructor to an underwater lair, a cave with air pockets (so the instructor won't drown). It is up to the PCs to find the lair and rescue the instructor. To complicate matters, if the PCs wish to retain the respect (and services) of the pacifistic swimming instructors, the rescue must be accomplished without shedding blood. ❑

Know Who Your Friends Are

Seeing Dopple In The AD&D® Game

by Bruce Nesmith

A silent, insidious monster has been sitting under your nose for years.

It's the doppleganger.

I don't know about your campaigns, but in all the AD&D games I have played, dopplegangers were ignored. The Game Master considered them silly, and the players gave them no respect.

Part of this is due to the poor definition of dopplegangers in the Monstrous Compendium. Part of it is Game Masters not knowing how to properly run the creature.

To get the full measure of a doppleganger, the Game Master must first understand how the conniving creature works. Contrary to popular thought, dopplegangers are rarely found in dungeons. Remember, these are very smart creatures. Why live in a cold, damp dungeon filled with dangerous monsters and traps when you are capable of living in comfort in a prosperous city?

Some folks might say that many dopplegangers have been driven out of the cities and are forced to live in dungeons. Hogwash! There is always another town, village or city available for a creature able to look like a normal citizen.

Put yourself in the shoes of a doppleganger that has just been chased out of Ravens Bluff. Are you going to brave the depths of a dungeon? No. You are going to find a nice little hamlet nearby and take refuge there.

The doppleganger has two primary weapons: Its physical mimicry and its *ESP* ability.

Little is known about the actual process of mimicry. However, the Monstrous Compendium states that dopplegangers are capable of assuming any humanoid shape from 4' to 8' tall. It also states they can duplicate clothing and equipment.

This is not enough for most Game Masters, as many questions are still left unanswered. For example, does the doppleganger get the class abilities of the character it mimics? If it mimics equipment, can it give that equipment to someone? What saving throws does the doppleganger use? What happens when a doppleganger dies? How close to or how far away from the original does a doppleganger have to be before it can duplicate a person?

Mimicry

The doppleganger can only change its outer shape, not its true nature. It must get a good look at its target before attempting to duplicate it. This usually means it must get within 30 feet or less. However, bad lighting can reduce this distance, and magic—such as *eyes of the eagle* or *clairvoyance*—can increase it. Even without magic, it is amazing how much detail a spyglass can pick up. The actual process of taking a new shape requires a full round.

When it assumes a duplicated form, the doppleganger retains all of its original combat values and attributes. It can make itself look incredibly muscular, but it is in fact no stronger. Dopplegangers' Strength scores range from 14 to 17. The Game Master can either roll 1d4 + 13 for Strength or else assume an average Strength of 15. Dopplegangers' hit dice, hit points, saves, natural AC and other combat values are all listed in the Monstrous Compendium. A doppleganger cannot recreate a character's class abilities such as multiple attacks, thief skills, and the like. This lack of specialized abilities usually is the clue that lead to the discovery of a doppleganger. (For this reason, the magical masks described on pages 26-27 in this issue would be priceless to a doppleganger.)

Equipment is a stranger tale. The doppleganger can alter the shape of equipment he carries. However, this only functions between items of similar materials. For example, a doppleganger can change a sword into an axe. It cannot change clothes into plate mail. The Game Master is encouraged to be a little generous here. For example, clothing is of similar composition to leather armor, so that change is all right. Rags could be made into an elaborate, multilayered gown.

By concentrating, the doppleganger can keep his belongings in counterfeit forms. While in a new form, the objects function normally. For example, a statuette changed into a music box can play music. However, if these objects get more than five feet away from the doppleganger, they revert back to their original forms.

Of course, the doppleganger knows full well the limitations of its mimicry. For this reason, it is rare to find a doppleganger not carrying a little bit of everything. Usually it wears normal clothes, carries a medium-sized metal weapon, and totes about small metal pieces, such as daggers and tools, and wooden objects, like figurines and lutes. You never know what you will need to imitate.

A doppleganger quickly tries to acquire real objects to replace the faked ones. It prefers not to worry about concentrating on items to retain their counterfeit shapes.

Since a doppleganger frequently murders its victim before assuming a new shape, it will attempt to strip the body of all belongings. There is no better match than the Real McCoy. If the replaced person's belongings are not available, then the doppleganger must quickly find good substitutions. For example, if it is using a sword to duplicate a battle axe, it will try to buy or steal a new battle axe.

ESP

The doppleganger's *ESP* operates like the 2nd level wizard spell. The sole exception is that a doppleganger can attempt to read a creature's mind as often as it wants. For the Game Master, this means there is little point in rolling saving throws for any PCs involved, since they are bound to fail sooner or later, and the doppleganger will know what they are thinking. Rolling a saving throw is only necessary in critical situations. For example, if the doppleganger needs a certain piece of knowledge within the next two rounds, the target PC should roll a saving throw vs. spells to see if the monster was able to pry the information out of his mind.

The ability to read minds serves the doppleganger in three major ways: Planning, mimicry, and maintenance. Initially, it can read the mind of its intended victim—and everyone around him. This makes it easier for the doppleganger to plan his adoption of the

victim's identity.

The doppleganger studies its target to find the time and place when the person will be alone and vulnerable. Next, it determines how to kill the person and do away with the body. Then it makes sure it has all the appropriate equipment to pull off the mimicry. All of this planning is done with extensive use of the *ESP* power.

Before it actually kills its quarry, the doppleganger spends several days reading the mind of the person. This is not to further the murder plot, but to familiarize itself with the victim's personality and lifestyle, and to mark the victim's close friends and associates.

Once the doppleganger is in place, it must decide what the mimicked character would say or do in any sticky situation. It can call upon some of its original research to help. However, it can also read the minds of the people around it to anticipate what decision should be made.

In short, the doppleganger is the master of doing just what the situation calls for. If a critical situation develops where the doppleganger must act in just the right way, it reads the minds of the people involved. From their thoughts, it can do what they expect of the mimicked character. In this way, others are never surprised and rarely become suspicious of the mimicked individual.

One of the trickier situations that a doppleganger must handle is skilled labor. The person that has been replaced doubtlessly had talents the doppleganger is unable to imitate. Even something as simple as becoming a court dandy has its dangers. For example, few dopplegangers know how to dance. If asked to waltz, a doppleganger could complain that it has two left feet, so to speak. The doppleganger often relies on its *ESP* to weasel out of tasks it is incapable of performing.

Lifestyles of the Rich

This inability to imitate skills means dopplegangers try to pick victims whose daily lives do not involve skilled labor or unique abilities. Wizards are probably the most avoided class for dopplegangers. As you might guess, rich merchants and nobles make the best targets. They are easier to imitate, and the doppleganger gets the rewards of a comfortable lifestyle as well.

Rumors abound that dopplegangers are inherently lazy. This is not true. When in someone else's form, the doppleganger seems to avoid all forms of work, not because it is slothful, but because it can't *do* the work.

If dopplegangers were lazy, they would not work so hard to set up and execute a murder and replacement. While the rewards of supplanting a wealthy noble are great, the actual replacement is tricky and highly risky. Truly lazy creatures would replace people who are easy targets.

It is true that dopplegangers are greedy cowards. They tend to frivolously spend the wealth they embezzle. When confronted, or in times of true danger, they flee.

Setting up the Switch

Dopplegangers rarely work alone. Each doppleganger belongs to a small, tightly knit clan of three to 12 members, and no children. The clan works together to place one of their family into a person's life.

When one doppleganger has a new life, it works from the inside to help the remainder of its clan replace others. Usually they work from the bottom up. It is difficult to replace a wealthy noble without inside help. So to begin, the dopplegangers might replace a guard. From there they might take the captain of the guard. With him under control, they aim for the steward or some other high level position. Now with several dopplegangers inside the noble's estate, it is relatively easy to replace the noble himself.

The exact plan for replacing people varies greatly from situation to situation. Sometimes a noble's home is secure enough that the entire clan can live within it. Other times some of the clan must take up lives outside of the noble's estate to ensure the safety of the family. For example, in a city of intrigue and skullduggery, the clan might replace both a merchant and his chief rival. Now both estates are relatively safe. In other situations, a captain of the city guard, a judge or another key official outside of the noble's estate needs to be replaced.

Ecology

The most important aspect of doppleganger ecology is their inability to reproduce amongst themselves. Although dopplegangers can imitate a member of either sex, in truth they are sexless. A doppleganger must mate with a human or demi-human to produce offspring, and the doppleganger genes always dominate.

The newborn child appears to be normal. In fact, it is indistinguishable from any other child of that race. Its doppleganger heritage does not surface until it reaches puberty. At that time, a member of the clan approaches the doppleganger and tells the child about its true nature.

Many doppleganger children become lost to the clan. Since there is a delay of a dozen years or more from the conception of the child until it is ready to be brought into the clan, there is a good chance that the doppleganger parent will be discovered and driven out. In these cases, the parent will attempt to make contact with its child when the time is right. However, this is not always possible. If the child does not learn about its true nature, at puberty it is likely to be discovered and killed by the humans or demi humans who raised it.

The clan is structured hierarchically. There is a leader, usually the oldest doppleganger, and a pecking order that tends to place the youngest at the bottom. When planning an infiltration, the youngest dopplegangers get the most dangerous jobs. The doppleganger that replaces the noble or merchant is usually the head of the clan.

Doppleganger, Uran

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Urban
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	High (13-14)
TREASURE:	E
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	3-12
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	6
THACO:	14
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Surprise
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See Below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	2000

The uran doppleganger is physically indistinguishable from the common doppleganger.

Combat: The principle power that separates the uran doppleganger from the common variety is its superior form of mimicry. Urans can actually imitate some of the abilities of their victims.

The uran doppleganger has a limited *shapechanging* ability. When an uran assumes a form, it gains all the abilities of its new form except for those abilities dependent upon intelligence, innate magical abilities, or magical resistance. Intelligence here is interpreted to mean the character's mind and personality, not just the attribute Intelligence.

Further, an uran doppleganger retains its own hit points and hit dice, including any current wounds. It suffers any natural penalties or vulnerabilities of its new form (e.g. a goblin's penalties in sunlight). However, like its common cousin, it always keeps its own saving throws and does not get those of its mimicked form. The uran doppleganger is limited to assuming living, humanoid forms between 4' and 8' tall. It can't become a spectre or a wolf.

Specifically, an uran that assumes the form of a player character gets that PC's THAC0 *bonuses* for Strength, number of attacks per round (for natural attacks only), damage and damage bonuses, AC, and attribute scores excluding Intelligence. The uran does not get any of the intelligence-dependent character class abilities, since those are based upon the experience of the character and not his physical form. Abilities dependent upon intelligence include spell casting and many other character class abilities.

For example, the uran doppleganger would not get the fighter's THAC0, nor his number of attacks per round. Unlike an animal's number of attacks per round, the fighter earns his as a result of his fighting experience. The doppleganger never gains experience points from adventuring with a party. In contrast, if the uran were to imitate the form of an annis hag, it would get that creature's three attacks per round, since those are a natural attack form of the monster.

The uran doppleganger must touch a person to imitate his abilities. Otherwise, it is only able to imitate the outer form, just like the common doppleganger. This touch usually happens when the doppleganger kills his victim.

An uran can remember the form of anyone it has previously duplicated, and recall that duplicate form at will. To gain the abilities, it must imitate clothing and equipment the character was wearing at the time of the touch. For example, it could not become a duplicate of Slivkin the Thief wearing the plate mail of Raxas the Ranger. Of course, once the doppleganger has transformed, there is nothing to prevent him from changing his clothes or equipment manually.

A further extension of the uran doppleganger's superior mimicry is what it can do with clothing and equipment. The common doppleganger is restricted to changing like material into like material. Not so with the uran specie. They can change any material into any other material. Like common dopplegangers, the objects only maintain their form so long as they are within five feet of the uran. A typical defensive strategy for many uran dopplegangers is to change into the form of a warrior in plate mail.

Habitat/Society: Among the doppleganger society at large, urans are held in great esteem. They are more powerful and cunning than the common doppleganger. The urans are considered to be closer to the revered form of the ultimate shapechanger.

Ecology: The ecology of the uran doppleganger is no different from that of the common doppleganger. They are a parasitical life form that steals men's lives. Like common dopplegangers, urans prefer the comfortable existence of urban life.

All dopplegangers are genderless. They reproduce by mating with other humanoids of any race or gender. Their young remain in the humanoid form until puberty. At that time they manifest the powers of their true heritage.

❑

Experience Preferred

Part One

An AD&D® 2nd Edition Game Scenario For Six Veteran Adventurers

Illustration by Scott Rosema

by Tom Prusa

DM Background

The characters provided with this scenario retired from adventuring many years ago. Their ages range from 67 to 151, and they are all residents of the *Nellie Thursday Home for Experienced Adventurers.*

Nellie Thursday is a dwarf who is at least 300 years old. She welcomes adventurers who have lived to a ripe old age. Life has been good at her retirement home—until recently. A former wizard resident has been threatening to destroy the home and everyone in it.

Nellie has called together a group of the most able residents (the PCs) to find the wizard, a former friend of theirs, and bring him back to his senses. Nellie insists they spare his life. However, the task will not be easy, as old age has taken its toll on most of the PCs.

The first part of the adventure takes place on the Plane of Olympus. At the end of this scenario is a list of how each character's equipment, weapons, and spells are effected by Olympus. Familiarize yourself with this before play begins. It also would be helpful to read pages 73-82 and 92-93 of *The Manual of the Planes* for reference. On Olympus, Ada only will be able to recover first and second level spells. Most spells work normally, although conjuration spells generally will be unsuccessful. In addition, alteration spells have a 40% chance of being altered. A table for random rolls is presented at the end of this scenario.

Players' Introduction

The fireplace is crackling nearby, and a young bard shifts on his stool. The old man on the chair opposite him smiles and says, "The impatience of youth. You want to hear my tale, but you don't wish to wait for an old man to tell it. The tale I will tell you is a perfect example of why youth is not always the answer. As has been said before, there is no substitute for experience."

The old man sits back, lights his pipe, and begins his story.

"As everyone knows, adventuring is dangerous business. The rewards are great, but the risks are high. Still, in spite of ferocious monsters,

gruesome undead, and perilous traps, some few adventurers survive. The best adventurers survive.

"But even the best adventurers will someday watch the swing of their sword get a bit slower, the memorizing of spells taking more energy. In short, they grow old.

"And since most adventurers spend their wealth as fast as they get it, they can't retire to rich towers or become barons and dukes. It was for this reason that an old dwarf, Nellie Thursday by name, founded a home for adventurers who had gotten a little long in the tooth.

"All went well at her home for more than a hundred years; the relative wealth of even poor adventurers was enough to provide them with many comforts and luxuries. Nellie also sought to serve as many of the residents' whims as possible. And she became quite rich at it, too. Many of the adventurers lived at her home for years and years, quite content, reliving past glories, and swapping tall tales of derring do.

"But one day Nellie received a very disturbing message. It seemed that Exeter, a former resident, was making threats about the home. No details were given, just the bare fact that the home and all its residents were doomed. Such threats are usually taken lightly, but Exeter was quite a powerful wizard, and in his last years at the home he had shown signs of increasing mental instability. In fact, he was mad as a hatter.

"Nellie called in Exeter's former roommate, an old adventuring companion of his named Wemick the Wise. Wemick had been a resident of the home for a long time. He was a wizard, and a sage besides. And, at 111 years old, he had the distinction of being the oldest human at the home. When consulted about the message, Wemick became very worried. He immediately began a search of his records to find a clue about where Exeter might be. After much research Wemick was sure he knew where Exeter was hiding. There was a small demi-plane which he and Exeter discovered during their adventuring days. They whimsically nicknamed it Kansas. In fact, Wemick had a scroll which would take him there.

"Wemick explained to Nellie that there is a one-way gate from Kansas to the prime material plane, and Wemick expected to go, find Exeter, and be back the next day.

"Nellie, knowing that there might be more to it than that, suggested Wemick take a few of the more active members of the home along—just in case.

"After much arguing and shouting the list was narrowed down to five more adventurers, mostly members of the Company of the Swan, Wemick's old adventuring group. "Matilda, the White Lady, the leader of the Company of the Swan, still trained with sword and armor daily. Although she was 89, she still was a very effective fighter. As always, she was to be accompanied by her devoted husband, Henry.

"Henry, the Shadow Master, was a potent illusionist. He knew his own mind, but Matilda never hesitated to "help" him with any decision.

"Sagrais Bigelow. This halfling thief was Henry's best friend. He had put on a pound or 30 since he retired; probably from the seven meals a day he'd wheedled out of Nellie. At 151, his hearing wasn't what it used to be, either, but no one ever snuck into a kitchen more quietly.

"Ratha Rann, The Eagle-Eyed, of the Company of the Swan, wasn't quite eagle-eyed anymore. In fact, he wore bifocals. He could cut quite a swath with the ladies, and perhaps that was why he was so insistent on going. Although he was 90, he didn't consider himself old—yet.

"Ada, the unbending, Judiciar of Tyr. This young, age 67, priest had recently retired to write her memoirs. She had been a judge, both judicial and clerical, for many years. It was said that in three decades as a judge, she never once reversed a decision.

"This stalwart band had to stop the threat to their home. Old magic items were dragged out, and spells were studied. With rising excitement, the Company of the Swan went into action again!"

The young bard shifted on his seat and eyed the old storyteller. "What happened?" he gushed.

"Just Listen. . . ."

Oops!

With a swirl and a bow, Wemick holds out his scroll and looks around the circle. "Everybody touching? All right, here we go." He begins to intone the words to his *teleport without error* spell. The air fills with magic, and the figure of Nellie, standing in the doorway, grows dim. At the last minute your ears are jarred by a disharmonious sound. Wemick frantically tries to complete the spell, but it is too late. The spell has been botched! With a feeling of nausea and dizziness you disappear and are teleported—somewhere!

You appear on a mountain trail. But what a mountain! It must rise for 20 miles above you. And it must be 10 miles down to flat ground. In the distance you spot a plain of grass. Beyond it is a forest of immense trees, redwoods from the size of them. There is no doubt that you are not on your own plane, but which plane or demi-plane have you come to?

The characters have landed on the Plane of Olympus. Wemick, if he thinks of it, can guess that the party is on an outer plane, and he predicts the party's +1 and +2 magical items no longer will be magical.

The Old Man of the Mountain

After the party has traveled about four miles down the mountainside, they see a cave. If they choose to travel up the mountain, explain that the air seems to be getting thin and cold. The longer they travel, the thinner it gets. Eventually, they will have to go back down.

The cave can be easily seen from about 150 yards away. As soon as the party gets within 120 yards of it, a voice speaks, seeming to erupt from their midst. "Welcome travelers. Come and enjoy the hospitality of my cave. You're just in time for tea." The speaker, still in the cave, is using *ventriloquism*. If the party does not approach, the voice speaks again. "Come, come, I'm just an old man like yourselves. The mountain is steep, and cold. It would be good to rest for a while."

The old man, Jerraman, comes to the cave mouth and waves the party inside.

He appears to be a loner, desperate to talk to someone, and he is garrulous. But despite all the talk, he reveals very

little actual information. If the PCs tell him their plight, he says he is not sure just where he is, either. You see, he was casting a *teleport without error* spell when something went wrong, and well. . . here he is. Jerraman adds he has a scroll that might get him out of here. But he isn't sure it will work, so he has never tried it.

He offers the party the scroll—if they will retrieve an arrow for him. The arrow rests in the quiver of the mistress of the forest. She rules around here, and he would dearly like to study some of her work. It can be any arrow, he says, just so it comes from her quiver.

Unknown to the PCs, the old man is not who he seems. He is actually Hermes, god of discord, *polymorphed*. Hermes is seeking to anger Artemis, the mistress of the forest, and he will try to use the arrow to initiate trouble. Hermes has genius-level Intelligence, so he will carry out his act to the PCs perfectly. The party should be convinced he is an old magic user, too scared to try an unknown magic item.

If the PCs ask to examine the scroll, he complies. It appears to be a good *teleport without error* scroll. He will immediately return it to his robes, and any attempt to steal it will automatically fail (pickpocket the god of thieves?).

If the PCs ask for directions, the old man gives them a *finder stone*, a small pebble which glows when pointed in the direction of the desired object. Jerraman has set it for the arrow. This is a one-use magic item, not rechargeable. Its magic works until the arrow is found.

If the party does not go along with the deal: Jerraman/Hermes points out that the party has very little choice. Casting a *plane shift* spell will not get them home, as they do not have the proper material components.

If the PCs attack Jerraman/Hermes or refuse to help him, he disappears—with the scroll the PCs need. He reappears an hour later offering them another chance. If they refuse, he automatically *quests* one of the characters to retrieve an arrow.

Jerraman (Hermes): Int Genius; AL CN; AC 2; MV 18, Fl 48; hp 340 (680 on Olympus); THAC0 6; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon +7; SA Always *hasted*; SD Spells; MR 120%; SZ M; ML 20; XP Nil (1,800 for agreeing to retrieve the arrow).

Magic items: *Winged sandals of flight, helm of invisibility, white caduceus* (which allows him control over non-magical creatures other than man.

Powers useable at will: *Astral travel, command, continual light/darkness, cure light wounds, cure serious wounds, cure critical wounds, heal, detect magic, detect evil, geas, levitate, polymorph self, protection from evil/good, sending, teleport without error, tongues, vocalize, atonement, improved phantasmal force, quest, improved invisibility, mirror image, mislead, regenerate, anti-magic shell, dispel illusion, enthrall, spell immunity, polymorph any object, globe of invulnerability, dispel evil/good, dispel magic, summon, shape change, polymorph others*

In addition, Hermes may use up to six of the following spells a day: *Death spell, restoration, symbol, wish, time stop, heal, gate, resurrection, vision, volley, holy/unholy word*

Flapping Wings

As the party moves down the mountain, they hear the flapping of wings above them. Stirges! Big ones! The stirges dive to the attack.

Stirge, giant (8): Int Animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 3, Fl 18 (C); HD 2+2; hp 16 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA Blood drain; SZ S; ML 8; XP 270 each.

The Grasslands

At the bottom of the mountain lies a plain that stretches some 30 miles toward the forest. The grass is a variety of wheat, but it grows more than five feet tall. The *finder stone* indicates north.

As the characters start across the plain, they notice several herds of deer, antelope and gazelles. The animals are unusually large and can be seen clearly even over the tall wheat. The herds are several miles away, and the party may move around them easily.

If the PCs want to investigate the herds, they can get to within 50 yards before the animals run away, frightened.

No matter what course the PCs take, they will have to deal with one herd of gazelles.

After traveling about four miles, Ratha notices a rumbling sound. Soon everyone can hear it. Coming into sight is a bucking, jumping mass, a stampede.

If the PCs choose to run, remind them that it has been quite a few years since most of them have done much running. If they insist on running, all the PCs except Ada and Matilda, who can handle a good jog, must make a Constitution check. PCs who fail the check are trampled, taking 2d8 points of damage. A clever use of spells or potions could make the PCs' escape automatic. A particularly flashy or noisy magical effect, for example, could turn the stampeding herd aside.

As the gazelles rush by, the party sees that several of the animals in the back have fallen, pierced by arrows. If the characters investigate, they find the arrows are finely made and tipped with eagle feathers. About this time several elves appear from the surrounding grass. The elves, carrying hunting bows, move quickly to meet the party.

Elves (5): Int Average; AL NG; AC 5; MV 12; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA Nil; SD Nil; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 13; XP Nil.

Elf, Lanarion: Int Average; AL NG; AC 2; MV 12; HD 5 (F5); hp 30; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA Nil; SD Nil; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 15; XP Nil (500 for getting Lanarion's information).

Lanarion is the leader of the hunting party. He apologizes for starting the stampede.

He and his men are amazed at the PCs' appearance. The elves have never seen an old person before.

If the PCs question the hunting party, the elves reveal:

- They do not know the name of this plane. However, they call the land "Home."
- Artemis wisely and justly rules the forest.
- The Mistress of the Forest is rarely seen. Lanarion last saw her more than 50 years ago.
- The monsters to be feared in this area are minotaurs, harpies, stirges, and a very large roc.
- Lanarion's village lies to the north, in the forest about 25 miles away. There is a river running along it, which flows fast and deep.

Maiden In Distress

The party can reach the forest about mid-morning. The gigantic trees are 700 feet tall, and the trunks range from 50 to 100 feet around. Game trails abound, and the party has no trouble finding one which heads toward the north, the direction the *finder stone* indicates.

After traveling five miles into the forest, the party hears faint cries. If

they continue on, the cries grow louder.

> "Help! Leave my tree alone," a feminine voice shrieks.
>
> A scream is punctuated by a chopping sound.

If the party moves to investigate, they emerge from around one giant tree to see that the next tree, a small (for this forest) silver oak, is being chopped down by six minotaurs. Even though the tree is more than 20 feet thick, they already have made a sizable dent in it. There is a dryad in the lowest branch, 60' from the ground, shrieking for help.

If the PCs do not state they are being quiet, the minotaurs notice them.

> "Hey, Chauncey, supper's come to call. Shall we stop and eat?"
>
> Another replies, "Nah, they don't look like they can move very fast. We'll round-em up when we're done here."
>
> The minotaurs take pulls at wine skins, stagger slightly, and resume their work on the tree.

If the party attacks, the PCs have a free attack round. However, if they attempt to negotiate, the minotaurs will be derisive, then hostile, eventually attacking.

Minotaurs (6): Int Low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 12+6; hp 66 each; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA Grapple, charge; SD +2 bonus on surprise roll; SZ L; ML 13; XP 3,000 each.

Because the minotaurs are drunk, they are −2 on their attack rolls.

Dryad: Int Exceptional; AL N; AC 9; MV 12; HD 2; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA Charm; SD Nil; MR 50%; SZ M; ML 14; XP Nil (500 for saving her tree).

The minotaurs fight until three or more of them are down, and then the remainder flee into the forest, promising revenge.

When the minotaurs are driven off, the dryad is grateful. She offers a *potion of extra healing* as her thanks. If the PCs question her, she can provide the following information:

- This is the forest of Artemis.
- The forest is huge, and she has not seen Artemis in this part of the forest for decades.
- The elven village to the north is friendly and has several wise elders.
- The Veiled One is a sorceress who lives about five miles to the northeast, along a bend in the river. She collects things, including weapons, and she is supposed to be very beautiful and very powerful. She might be a good source of information.

The Veiled One

The party spies a manor built against the side of a large redwood. As they move closer, they spot several elves on guard. The PCs likewise are spotted, and one of the elves runs into the manor. He emerges a few moments later, motioning to the PCs.

The guards welcome the PCs to the manor and escort them into the sitting room.

> There is a comfortable chair for everyone in the sitting room. The elven servants bring fine wine and sweets. Soon your hostess enters. Her face is veiled, with only her eyes exposed. She looks to be a lovely elven female. She greets you courteously, introduces herself as Gharleee, and asks what such distinguished looking people are doing traveling through the forest.

Gharleee is actually a medusa, who is appearing to the PCs as an elf because of a *polymorph self* spell. Gharleee rules this part of the forest and fears no one but Artemis. Fortunately for Gharleee, the goddess has more important things to do than bother with a medusa.

The only way the PCs could see through Gharleee's ruse is if they cast *dispel magic* or *true seeing* (though *know alignment* could arouse some suspicions). Of course, Gharleee will be very courteous and kind to them, giving them no excuse to doubt her.

If the PCs explain their plight and their need for an arrow of Artemis, Gharleee says she has two such arrows. She is willing to part with one of them—if the PCs run an errand for her.

She wants the PCs to travel to an elf village along the river and pick up a gift they have for her. There is a very large roc preying in the area, and she is afraid to go. When the PCs return with the gift, she will hand over an arrow.

A servant provides directions to the village. It is a 20-mile trek, so the PCs likely will have to spend the night in the village.

Gharleee, Medusa: Int Very; AL LE; AC 0; MV 9; HD 12; hp 60; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA Petrification, poison; SZ M; ML 14; XP: 6,000.

She wears a *ring of protection +3, bracers of defense AC 3,* and carries a *wand of magic missiles* (12 charges).

Spells carried: *Charm person, magic missile, burning hands, flaming sphere, web, invisibility, detect invisibility, hold person, lightning bolt, dispel magic, polymorph self* (cast), *fumble, wizard eye, stone to flesh, telekinesis, wall of stone, globe of invulnerability*

The Elf Village

After a hard afternoon's travel, the PCs find the path along the river blocked by a large thicket of trees. As the party begins to move around it, a voice shouts out: "Stand, and be recognized. Who comes to the dwelling of the Leiren elves?" A pair of elven guards appear from out of the underbrush. If the PCs state they are travelers, they will be welcomed with kindness. However, if the characters mention Gharleee, the guards become cold and conduct them to Thanna, mayor of the town.

The mayor's home and office is in a tree. The PCs will have to climb more than 150' to speak with him. A simple, yet lovely treehouse awaits. It has a wooden floor and vines growing on the sides and above for privacy. Thanna is waiting for the party in his meeting room. He invites them to be seated.

Thanna greets the characters soberly. He is a distinguished looking elf, yet a little rough looking. He asks if the characters truly come from the Veiled One. When they admit it, he sighs and says, "What a shame. You look like good folk, for humans. Why would you associate with someone like her?"

The mayor explains that the "gift" for Gharleee is the lifeblood of the village. He refuses to elaborate. He tells the PCs they are welcome to spend the night; the gift will be ready in the morning.

Thanna Silvertree, mayor: Int Average; AL NG; AC 5; MV 12; HD 1; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 13, XP Nil.

In the morning the PCs are fed a sparse breakfast and will have to climb down the rope ladder without the assistance of elf guards. At the foot of the tree, a half-dozen young elves await. The mayor joins the group and waves his hand to indicate the youths. This is the gift, he tells the PCs.

Thanna explains that these young

elves are to serve Gharleee for life. It is the tribute the village must pay to remain safe.

If the PCs refuse to deliver the gift, the mayor says it must be done. The village cannot be risked. Further, all six must be taken to the Veiled One, or they will have to increase the gift next time. The mayor tells the PCs they can stop the slavery by killing Gharleee. Thanna has the following information:

- The Veiled One has lived in these parts for the past 30 years. She appeared one day and demanded to be queen. When she was rejected, she slew several of the village elders, including all the spell-casters. The former mayor was found, a broken stone statue. Thanna was named the new mayor.
- The Veiled One has demanded servants regularly, as tribute.
- It is rumored the Veiled One has other forms besides that of an elf. Some say she is an archmage and can change shape at will. Others think that she is some sort of monster, one which can cast spells.

Young elves: Int Average; AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M; ML 13; XP Nil.

Big Bird Strikes

Three hours after the PCs have started back to Gharleee's, have the lead character make a surprise roll. If the character is not surprised, the party spots a huge roc high above.

The roc obviously has noticed the PCs, as it is dropping toward them. The characters can have two free rounds of attacks on the creature before it is in their midst.

If the PCs were surprised, they see the roc 100 feet above them. This gives them only one free attack round.

The roc's first action is to grab one of the young elves. In the following round, it will attempt to grab another victim, roll randomly.

If it succeeds in picking up two persons, it will fly away to have its lunch.

Roc, giant: Int Animal; AL N; AC 2; MV 3, Fl 30 (C); HD 36; hp 178; THAC0 3; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 3-18 + 1/3-18 + 1 or 4-24 + 1; SA −5 on opponents' surprise rolls; SZ G; ML 11; XP 9,000 (defeat), 18,000 (slay).

DM NOTE: If the roc is damaged for more than half its hit points, it will fly away, taking whatever it has managed to grab. If damaged for 75% or more, it will drop whatever it is holding and attempt to fly away.

Confronting The Veiled One

When the PCs reach Gharleee's home, they face several options:

- Turn the elves over to Gharleee, collect the arrow and leave. Of course, it will not be that simple, but they don't know that.
- Enter the manor house and attempt to attack by surprise. This, too, will not be easy.
- Simply barge in and attack. This is not sensible, but it might work.

No matter what course of action the PCs attempt, Gharleee will be cautious. She meets the party via a *projected image* cast from a scroll. The medusa is actually in another room, watching the characters with a *wizard eye*.

Her faithful followers, Clarig and Zandor, will be the medusa's first line of defense.

Gharleee's image thanks the characters for bringing her gift, and asks if they wish to remain as her servants. She tells Ratha that she could use a consort. If the party attacks, her image will not be dispelled. However, the battle alerts Clarig and Zandor, who quickly rush to join the fight.

Zandor casts *mirror image* on himself, then a blue *chromatic orb* on a PC fighter, followed by *blindness, confusion,* and others as appropriate.

If Zandor is seriously injured, Gharleee will turn to her medusa form and move to the doorway behind him, attempting to petrify the PCs.

While in her medusa form, Gharleee can look at one opponent per round, forcing him or her to save vs. petrification. The gaze is a free attack and can be used in addition to other attacks.

If a character is deliberately avoiding the gaze, the saving throw is at +4, but the PC suffers a −4 penalty to other attacks and defenses (−2 if the character has the blind-fighting proficiency).

If a character physically melees Gharleee, she also attacks with her snake heads; a successful hit does 1-4 points of damage. Characters struck must save vs. poison or die.

Gharleee attempts to immobilize the PCs, as she would like to have them as servants. However, if the PCs are dishing out too much damage, she abandons this strategy and fights to kill them.

If Gharleee is seriously injured, she flees to her room where she has hidden a scroll with a *dimension door* spell. She intends to escape.

Clarig, human fighter: Int Average; AL LE; AC −2; MV 9; HD 9 (F9); hp 77; THAC0 10; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8 + 4; SZ M; ML 15; XP 2,000.

Clarig wears *plate mail +1*, carries a *long sword +1*, and has an *amulet of protection from petrification.* Before joining the fight, he drinks a *potion of speed.*

Zandor, human illusionist: Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC −2; MV 12; HD 10 (W10); hp 30; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SZ M; ML 15; XP 4,000.

Zandor has *bracers of defense AC 2*, a *ring of protection +1, wand of paralyzation* (24 charges), and an *amulet of protection from petrification.* He cast *mirror image* prior to joining the fight.

Spells carried: *Chromatic orb,* dancing lights, hypnotism, blindness* (x2), *improved phantasmal force, mirror image, ventriloquism, suggestion, nondetection, fear, confusion, rainbow pattern, maze*

* New spell from the *Complete Wizard's Handbook.* If you don't have this book, replace this spell with *grease.*

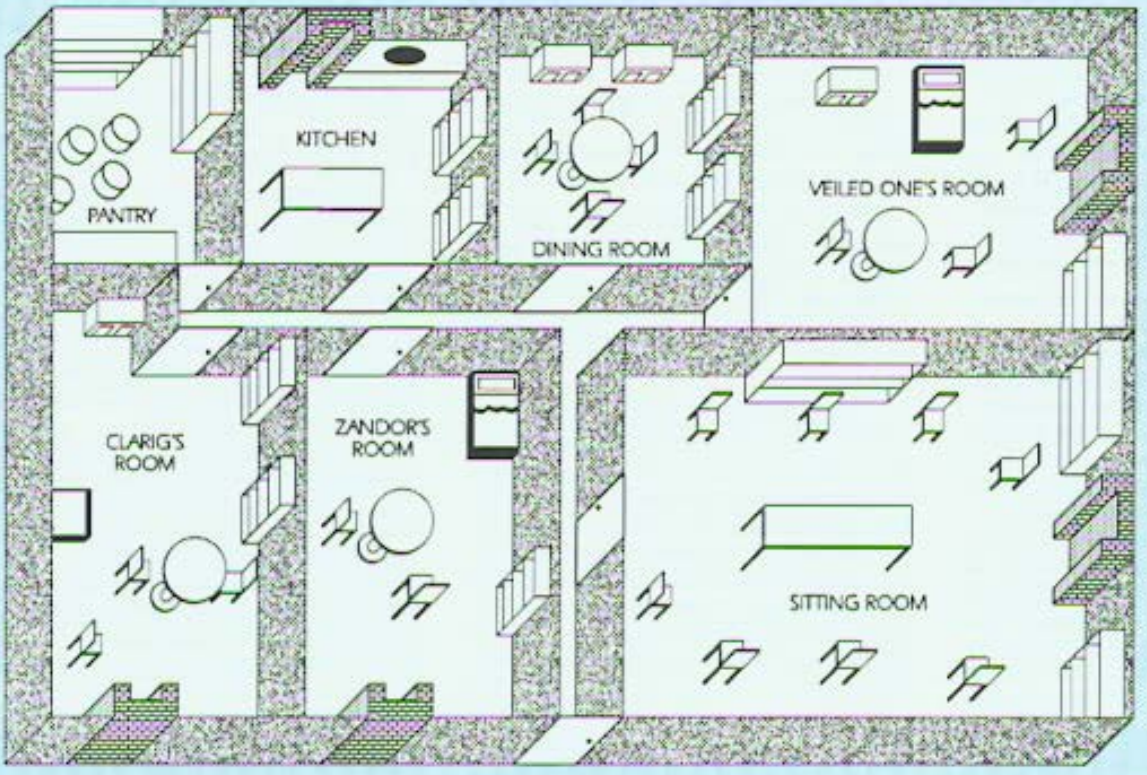
Gharleee, Medusa: Int Very; AL LE; AC 0; MV 9; HD 12; hp 60; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA Petrification, poison; SZ M; ML 14; XP 6,000.

She wears a *ring of protection +3, bracers of defense AC 3,* and carries a *wand of magic missiles* (12 charges).

Spells carried: *Charm person, magic missile, burning hands, flaming sphere, web, invisibility, detect invisibility, hold person, lightning bolt, dispel magic, polymorph self, fumble, wizard eye, stone to flesh, telekinesis, wall of stone, globe of invulnerability*

If the party defeats Gharleee, they find a scroll with two *flesh to stone* spells on it, and the arrow they have been seeking.

They can return to Jerraman and get their *teleport* scroll. The grateful elves will happily escort the PCs to Jerraman, providing a safe and uneventful journey.



HOME OF THE VEILED ONE

Effects Of Olympus

Spells which change the shape or matter of objects, such as *polymorph* spells, have a 40% chance of not functioning correctly. You may use the following table, or decide on the effect yourself.

D100 roll	Effect
1-10	No Change.
11-30	Target changes appearance, retains all original properties.
31-50	Target does not change in appearance, but gains the properties of the new form.
51-70	Target changes to resemble some nearby random object or creature but retains abilities of its original form.
71-90	Target changes to resemble some nearby random object or creature and gains the abilities and powers of that object.
91-00	Target changes in form and function into something not in the nearby area. DM fiendishness is encouraged.

This chart was taken from page 79 of the *Manual of the Planes* tome.

Ada: Hammer is still +3 vs. evil, however, it is non-magical against all others. Splint & shield are non-magical. AC = 3.

Henry: Cloak and sling are non-magical. Shadow magic is only at 1/2 effect, due to the distance from the plane of shadows. AC = 3.

Matilda: Chain and shield are non-magical. Scimitar is +1, but retains its speed property. AC = 4.

Ratha Rann: Ranger abilities unchanged. All items are non-magical except bifocals. AC = 4.

Sagrais Bigelow: Thief abilities are unchanged. Dagger is non-magical, but it will extend to short sword size. Ring is also non-magical. AC = 6.

Wemick: All items work normally except for the cane which is +1 to hit and damage when charges are used. If 2 or 3 charges are used, the damage bonus is +2 or +3, respectively.

Wemick's Actual Spell List

Unfortunately, your recent absent-mindedness seems to show up most when you study spells. It's so hard to concentrate. You must have studied some of the wrong spells by mistake, because these are the ones you actually remember.

Spells Memorized: Level One: *Magic missile* (x2), *audible glamer, Tenser's floating disc, magic mouth* (x2); Level Two: *Continual light, invisibility, levitation, Melf's acid arrow;* Level Three: *haste, hold person, Melf's minute meteors, tongues;* Level Four: *Ice storm, stoneskin, telekinesis, wizard eye;* Level Five: *Cone of cold, fabricate*

And to your horror, you realize that you forgot to pack your spell books! You will be unable to relearn spells until you get home.

❑

Matilda the White Lady

9th Level Female Human Fighter

STR: 14
INT: 13
WIS: 13
DEX: 12
CON: 13
CHR: 15

AC Normal: 1
AC Rear: 3
Hit Points: 72
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Orcish
THAC0: 12

Age: 89
Height: 6'
Weight: 130 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Silver/Blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Scimitar (specialized), flail, lance, spear, short sword, bastard sword
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Endurance (13), horse riding (16), blind-fighting, swimming (14), artistic ability, needlepoint (13)

Magic Items: *White chain mail +2, shield +1, scimitar of speed +3, 2 potions of extra healing, 2 potions of hill giant strength, potion of speed* (all these potions are at least 40 years old and might not be potent anymore)
Equipment: Spear, backpack, water skin, belt pouch, 6 torches, 3 candles, needle & thread (assorted colors), 4 pairs of support leggings, last month's copy of Good Castlekeeping, current needlework project (a unicorn leaping over a brook), spare set of clothes, 4 bars of chocolate, hairbrush, comb, bar of soap, small mirror, 25 sp, 35 gp, 10 pp, 5 bloodstone trade bars worth 25 gp each

Here at the *Nellie Thursday Home for Experienced Adventurers*, my husband, Henry, and I have a fine life. We share an elegant suite of rooms. There is even a training area where I keep in shape. Nellie is a dear old dwarf, hundreds of years old, and has been my close friend for all the 30 years Henry and I have lived here.

Henry is my husband of 40 years, and he is a dear thing, but he is very indecisive. Fortunately, I can make the decisions for both of us. For instance, Henry didn't know what to do when we heard that Wemick's long lost roommate, Exeter, was threatening the home. I knew immediately that it was our duty to assist Wemick, and I told Henry so. I hate to nag at him all the time, but it is

Ada the Unbending

9th Level Female Human Priestess of Tyr

STR: 16
INT: 12
WIS: 18
DEX: 10
CON: 10
CHR: 15

AC Normal: 0
AC Rear: 2
Hit Points: 56
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarvish, Centaur
THAC0: 16

Age: 67
Height: 5' 10"
Weight: 125 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Blond/Blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Hammer, mace, lasso, staff
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Law (18), healing (19), rope use (9), religion (18)

Magic Items: *Splint mail +2, shield +1, ring of regeneration, 3-D mirror*, warhammer +3* (named Gavel; does double damage vs. chaotic evil opponents, can cast *detect lie* once a day when held and commanded), *scroll* (five spells: *Cure disease, resist fire, cure critical wounds, heal,* and *sanctuary*; all scribed at 15th level)

* *3-D Mirror:* Creatures reflected in this mirror are shown in three dimensions. If the *mirror* is turned over, the creature is shown from behind.
Spells/day: 6 6 4 3 1
Equipment: Backpack, 2 bars of soap, 2 sets of fine clothes, silver scales (holy symbol), 4 vials of holy water, hairbrush, comb, perfume, 2quills, 3 bottles of ink, 20 empty sheets of papyrus, notes for book, blue cloak, 5 flasks of oil, bullseye lantern, tinderbox, 2 weeks' rations, water skin, lasso, 45 sp, 33 gp, 16 pp, 2 blue sapphires (1,200 gp each), jewelled hairpin (145 gp)

As a priestess of Tyr, Ada can turn undead. She has major access to the spheres of All, Astral, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Guardian, Healing, Necromantic, Protection, and Sun. Ada has minor access to the Elemental sphere.

I am the newest resident at the *Nellie Thursday home for Experienced Adventurers.* I moved here about a year ago.

Ratha Rann the Eagle-Eyed

9th Level Male Human Ranger

STR: 13
INT: 15
WIS: 16
DEX: 8
CON: 12
CHR: 16

AC Normal: 1
AC Rear: 3
Hit Points: 75
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Halfling, Elvish, Hill Giant
THAC0: 12

Age: 92
Height: 6' 1"
Weight: 204 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Black (dyed)/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Spear, hand axe, long bow, long sword, knife, javelin
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting, swimming (13) fire-building (15), musical instrument, lyre (15), direction sense (17), tracking (19), read/write Common (15)

Magic Items: *Chain mail +2, shield +1, long sword +1, long bow +2†, 20 arrows +1, bifocals of the eagle**

* *Bifocals of the Eagle:* These eye cusps have split lenses. The top halves serve as *eyes of the eagle*, and the bottom halves allow far-sighted wearers to read.
† Ratha's farsightedness, and *bifocals*, reverse the range modifiers "to hit" for his bow: Short −5, medium −2, long 0.
Spells/day: 2
Equipment: Backpack, belt pouch, water skin, lyre, 2 throwing knives (in boots), 2 sets of fine clothes, 5 day's rations, 3 small mirrors, lizard-skin boots, 3 extra bow strings, 2 bottles of expensive (45 gp each) perfume (for gifts), bottle of cologne, silver shaving kit, comb, hairbrush, 3 bottles of black hair dye, 3 white silk handkerchiefs, bottle of lens cleaner, flask of fine elderberry wine, Silver unicorn brooch (holy symbol), fake ruby ring, 2 bars of scented soap, 25 sp, 12 gp, 3 pp, 2 turquoise earrings (55 gp each)

Ranger Abilities

HS	MS
56	70

Ratha casts priest spells from the spheres of Plant and Animal. If wearing studded leather or lighter armor Ratha can attack with two weapons and use

his stealth abilities at no penalty. He has a +4 "to hit" bonus vs. giants and a −4 reaction penalty when encountering giants. Ratha can influence the reactions of natural animals (save vs. rods at −3 negates)

I have a fine life at the *Nellie Thursday Home for Experienced Adventurers.* I retired here 25 years ago after some financial reverses. I am NOT old. I prove it by chasing all the pretty girls I meet.

My hair seems to be going prematurely gray, so I use dye to keep it the lustrous black it always has been. My eyesight is not what it used to be, so I wear bifocals. They are made of silver, and they look very good on me.

Recently, I caused a scandal when I wanted to have a girl friend, 22 years old, move in with me. The uproar made her reconsider, and I haven't found another girl yet. Ada, the new cleric, is attractive, and I have my sights set on her. Volunteering for this mission was one of the best ideas I've had. Ada is sure to be impressed.

Ada the Unbending: My newest heartthrob. She is older than the girls I normally go after, and a bit straightlaced, but her looks more than make up for it.
Matilda the White Lady: What a nag! She never gives Henry, her husband, any peace. If she and Henry hadn't married I might have courted her. Thank Mielikki I didn't.
Sagrais Bigelow: This fat old halfling thief is a good friend of mine. In his day, he was a very sharp master thief. Though claims he is as fit as ever, his hearing isn't what it used to be. I'll have to watch out for him.
Henry the Shadow Master: This illusionist is very sharp mentally, but I have little respect for him. Imagine being afraid of a woman! He even quit smoking his pipe, his one true pleasure in life, just because his wife told him to. Pitiful.
Wemick the Wise: Now here is someone who is old. He is the oldest human at the home. He is still a very wise old man—he's the fellow who made my bifocals—but he has been getting more and more absent-minded all the time. In our adventuring days he was a powerful wizard, but now I feel that the party should not depend on him too much. He claims he knows exactly where Exeter is. I'll wait and see.
Exeter: Wemick's roommate disappeared 15 years ago. He was always a competent mage, although not as powerful as Wemick. Now he is threatening the home.

Adonyne, my daughter, finally was promoted to High Priestess. I'm not really old enough to retire, but I wished to give Adonyne the opportunity to get out from under my shadow. Besides, this is a good place to write my memoirs (I intend to call them *Justice For All*).

I am a priestess of Tyr, god of Justice, and I have presided over many cases in the past 30 years. I've heard some snide remarks about the amount of time I spend in front of the mirror. I don't care about remarks. Tyr expects his servants to maintain an appearance that befits their stations in life.

I never was one to care about popular opinions. I never once reversed a decision in more than 30 years as a judge. I understand the importance of being right the first time. To my knowledge, I never once made a wrong decision.

I have never heard of Exeter, just that he was Wemick's roommate. Nellie told me he was a mage who disappeared from the home 15 years ago, and now he is threatening the home. If he is sick, he needs my help. If he is evil, he will get another kind of help from me.

Wemick the Wise: This old sage is approaching senility. He has a great reputation as a scholar, and he did a top-notch job in figuring out where this Exeter fellow probably is. However, Wemick seems to be absent-minded. He is a spry old gentleman, and always concerned and courteous, but I am not sure if he should be out adventuring.
Matilda the White Lady: This is a fine woman. She understands my position on justice and the law. She agrees that justice must be both fair and strict. Her mind is sharp. Clearly she and I will share the burden of seeing this mission to a successful conclusion.
Henry the Shadow Master: This man couldn't decide what to eat for breakfast by himself. Fortunately, Matilda seems to have enough backbone for the both of them. As far as adventuring goes, I never thought much of illusionists, and Henry is a good example of why.
Sagrais Bigelow: This fat old halfling doesn't seem to belong with the group. But Wemic says Sagrais and Henry used to work well together. I'll have to see it to believe it.
Ratha Rann the Eagle-Eyed: This old ranger is a pest, but he is also quite charming when he wants to be. His mind is active, and even though he probably dyes his hair, he at least recognizes the importance of a correct appearance.

for his own good. It took 20 years to get him to quit smoking that foul, disgusting pipe, but he is much healthier for it, and now he doesn't miss it at all.

This mission to recover Exeter is my first adventuring experience in more than 30 years, but I am confident that I can still handle myself in any situation. I have kept in shape. This adventure will show I haven't been wasting my time.

Henry the Shadow Master: My dear wishy-washy husband. I look out for him constantly. As long as he listens to me, he will do fine. I always try to watch him and point out any little things he does wrong, for his own good.
Ada the Unbending: The newest resident at the home. Ada claims she only retired to write her memoirs. She is still in fine shape, and will obviously share the practical duties of leadership with me. She spends too much time on her appearance, and she is as stubborn as a mule, but she seems to be a trustworthy person.
Wemick the Wise: Wemick is the oldest human at the home. He is supposed to know exactly where we are going. Fine. But he still is an absent-minded old man. Or maybe senile is a better word for it. Still, he has spent months researching Exeter's location, and once he was a very wise man. I will have to stay on my toes and hope for the best.
Sagrais Bigelow: This halfling is a perfect example of someone really letting himself go. He must be as big around as he is tall. In our old adventuring days he and Henry used to work very well together. But now I have serious doubts about his abilities. Who ever heard of a deaf thief?
Ratha Rann the Eagle-Eyed: This ranger is a dirty old man. He dyes his hair and chases after girls a quarter his age. Why can't he be more like Henry? What he needs is to settle down with a good woman. Ada, the new girl, might be perfect for him. She could settle him down if anyone could.
Exeter: Wemick's roommate used to adventure with me. He was always trying to outdo Wemick, and never succeeded. He always was a little high-strung, and now I think he has cracked completely. He disappeared 15 years ago, without a trace. As crazy as he is, I had better be ready for anything.

Sagrais Bigelow
11th Level Male Halfling Thief

STR: 7
INT: 15
WIS: 16
DEX: 14
CON: 15
CHR: 13

AC Normal: 4
AC Rear: 4
Hit Points: 48
Alignment: Neutral (Good tendencies)
Languages: Common, Thieves' Cant, Dwarven, Orcish, Halfling, Goblin, Elvish, Gnome
THAC0: 15

Age: 150
Height: 3' 3"
Weight: 93 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Gray/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, sling, knife, dart
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting, pony riding (19), herbalism (16), rope use (16), fire building (15)

Magic Items: *Dagger +2 longtooth, ring of protection +2, bracers of defense AC 6, pouch of accessibility, dinner plate*, scroll* (five wizard spells: *invisibility, hold person, wall of ice, mending,* and *magic missile* all scribed at 11th level)

* *Dinner Plate:* When warmed over an open fire, this thick china plate will produce an average meat-and-potatoes dinner. It can be used four times a day. It has seen a lot of use, but still works fine.

Equipment: Sling, chef's knives, 50' rope, 2 flasks of oil, leather backpack, 5 small sacks, tinderbox, water skin, thieves tools (one pick hidden in hair), 12 pounds of assorted food (snacks, vegetables, and cooking herbs), ivory pipe carved in the shape of a mermaid, 2 pouches of tobacco, hearing trumpet (adds 20% to detect noise chances), assorted pots and pans, 3 dinner settings (plates, silverware, goblets, and napkins), 4 cups, 2 pounds of ground coffee, 12 teabags, *How to Cook the Monster that Just Tried to Eat You When There's Nothing Else to Eat* by Nellie Thursday, 20 silver sling bullets, 20 darts, 2 bottles of sherry, bottle of brandy, 23 sp, opal (480 gp), agate (44 gp), jeweled silver cup (1224 gp)

Henry the Shadow Master
10th Level Male Human Illusionist

STR: 9
INT: 18
WIS: 17
DEX: 15
CON: 11
CHR: 9

AC Normal: 1
AC Rear: 3
Hit Points: 41
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Halfling, Elvish, Dwarvish, Gnome, Pixie, Orc
THAC0: 17

Age: 88
Height: 5' 6" (usually stoops to 5' 3")
Weight: 98 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Gray/Black

Weapon Proficiencies: Sling, dagger
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Healing (15), horse riding (20), herbalism (16), tobacco curing (15)

Magic Items: *Cloak of protection +2, bracers of defense AC 5, orthopedic shoes of dexterity*, sling of seeking +2, wand of paralyzation* (5 charges), *carpet-bag of holding* (capacity 1,500 lbs.)

* *Orthopedic Shoes of Dexterity:* These boost the wearer's dexterity by one point (18 maximum) and grant a 33% chance to move silently as the thief ability.

Spells/day: 4 4 3 2 2; plus one additional *illusion/phantasm* spell of each level
Equipment: Spell components, traveling spellbooks, full water skin, 30' rope, dagger, 20 sling bullets, 3 flasks of oil, 5 pouches of tobacco, ivory pipe in the shape of a dolphin, corncob pipe, 2 weeks' iron rations, 3 fresh robes, 5 bottles of pine-scented air freshener, shaving kit, small mirror, 25 gp (hidden in false bottom in shaving kit)

Traveling Spellbooks: Level One: *Read magic, dancing lights, detect magic, gaze reflection, phantasmal force[1], spook[1], burning hands, color spray;* Level Two: *Alter self, blindness, mirror image[1], Henry's hide-a-smell, invisibility[1], ventriloquism[1], whispering wind[1];* Level Three: *Tongues, illusory script[1], hold person, spectral force[1], wraithform[1], item;* Level Four: *Improved invisibility[1], minor creation[1], solid fog, emotion;* Level Five: *Shadow door[1], shadow magic[1], stone shape*

[1] *illusion/phantasm* spell

Wemick the Wise
11th Level Male Human Wizard

STR: 5
INT: 18
WIS: 18
DEX: 14
CON: 12
CHR: 13

AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 29
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Silver Dragon, Halfling, Dwarvish, Orcish, Drow, Minotaur
THAC0: 17

Age: 111
Height: 5'10"
Weight: 180 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Gray/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, cane (staff)
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Glass blowing (13), spellcraft (16), metaphysics of the upper outer planes (sage ability) (14), human genealogy (sage ability) (16), read/write Common (18)

Magic Items: *Cane of striking** (22 charges), *bracers of defense AC 5, wand of lightning* (10 charges), *scroll* (five spells: *polymorph self, jump, Melf's minute meteors, spell turning,* and *phantom steed* all scribed at 15th level), *ring of wizardry* (doubles 2nd level spells)
* Identical to a *staff of striking*

Spells/day: 4 4 4 3 3; eight 2nd level spells with *ring of wizardry*
Equipment: Cloak, belt pouch, wine skin, bar of soap, washcloth, towel, spare robe, dagger, notes on where Kansas is, book on whether the devas of Arcadia have five fingers on the end of each hand or six, 3 flasks of oil, spell components, low-heeled shoes, 12 gp, 2 pearls (100 gp each)

Traveling Spellbooks: Level One: *Magic missile, audible glamer, Tenser's floating disc, magic mouth, read magic, detect magic, feather fall, identify, message, unseen servant, ventriloquism;* Level Two: *Continual light, invisibility, levitation, Melf's acid arrow, detect invisibility, knock, magic mouth;* Level Three: *Haste, hold person, Melf's minute meteors, tongues, clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, secret page;* Level Four: *Ice storm, stoneskin, telekinesis, wizard eye, shout, minor globe of invulnerability;* Level Five: *Cone of cold, fabricate, rock to mud, wall of force*

I have been happy at the *Nellie Thursday Home for Experienced Adventureres.*

Now, however, Nellie, the old dwarf who runs the home, has told me about threats she has received from my old roommate and friend, Exeter. He claims he will destroy the home and all within it.

It is my duty to seek Exeter out and bring him back for help. He will have to have a base of operations, and I am sure I know where that is. He is hiding on a small demi-plane the two of us discovered during our adventuring days. We whimsically named it "Kansas." I have a powerful *teleport without error* spell on a scroll which will let me get the party there. Once there, we can fetch Exeter and use a one-way gate to return to the Prime Material plane.

Although I am wiser than ever, I have noticed that in the past 10 years or so, it is harder and harder for me to concentrate. Nevertheless, I have a few spells and magic items that will help me out.

Henry the Shadow Master: A competent illusionist. In the old days, he worked with the party thief, a short fellow named. . . um, now what was I talking about? Oh! Henry used to provide illusory distractions at the opportune moment for the party thief.
Matilda the White Lady: This fighter is loud, shrill, and a bully to Henry. Did I mention that Henry was married to Matilda? She might help the party, but it's going to be tough to put up with all that noise.
Ada the Unbending: This young cleric insisted on coming along. She is pretty, strong, and may just be able to cure Exeter (if he really is sick).
Sagrais Bigelow: This old halfling thief used to work very well with Henry. He has put on a lot of weight in the past 30 years. His hearing is going, too. But he does have an extremely good knowledge of locks, and he can move quietly when he wants to.
Ratha Ran, the Eagle-Eyed: Here is someone who does not know how to act his age. He is at least 90, and he chases after young women. He dyes his hair, and he wears fancy cologne. He used to have incredible eyesight, but recently I had to fashion him a set of bifocals.
Exeter: My roommate always was kind of moody. As he grew older, his temper became hotter, and he became more and more distant from me. Still, he was my friend for more than 70 years.

Henry's Hide-A-Smell (Alteration)

Level: Second/Wizard
Range: 20 yards
Components: V,S
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 10' radius/level
Saving throw: None

This spell negates any one smell. If the source of the smell still is present when the spell expires, the masked smell is revealed. Note that all smells are subtly different, and if Henry and Sagrais were both smoking tobacco, this spell would have to be cast twice to negate the smell.

The *Nellie Thursday home for Experienced Adventurers* has been a fine place to retire. I settled here 30 years ago with my dear wife Matilda.

I very much enjoy a good pipe. But Matilda will not let me smoke. Since I invented *Henry's hide-a-smell* I have whiled away many days sitting in my study, peacefully smoking pipe after pipe, invisible and unsmellable.

Matilda the White Lady: My wife of 40 years. She tends to nag, a lot. Over the years I have learned that it is easier to go along with her than to argue. When we heard about Wemick's old roommate's threats against the home, Matilda decided we'd join an expedition to find him. As always, I agreed.
Wemick the Wise: A full wizard, and a wise sage. He carries some powerful spells. But in the past 10 years or so he has become very absent minded.
Sagrais Bigelow: In our old adventuring days, this halfling and I worked very well together, combining illusions, invisibility, and stealth. He has put on 30 or 40 pounds since then, and his hearing has faded. I trust him, and he is the only one who knows I still smoke.
Ada the Unbending: This cleric is the home's newest resident. She is a lot like Matilda in her younger days, and I stay away from her.
Ratha Rann the Eagle-Eyed: This ranger used to have very keen eyesight. Now he wears glasses. He thinks he is Leira's gift to women, and dyes his hair. He should act his age, instead of chasing women a quarter his age. Still, I admire his spirit.
Exeter: Wemick's roommate disappeared almost 15 years ago. I always thought I would be a match for him, and if Wemick falters, it may come to that.

Thief Abilities

PP	OL	FT	MS	HS	DN	CW	RL
95	77	75	96	85	5	81	35

Here at the *Nellie Thursday Home For Experienced Adventurers* I am happy and safe. I have many friends, and none of the pressures of the adventuring life. I retired here 35 years ago. Some old friends from my adventuring days live here, and when they asked me to help find Exeter, Wemick's long lost roommate, I couldn't find a good reason to refuse.

I'm not sure just how well I'll do on this mission. I have put on quite a little weight, and my hearing isn't what it used to be, but I can still pick a lock with the best of them and nobody can beat a halfling when it comes to moving quietly.

Henry the Shadow Master: The illusionist is my best friend. In our old adventuring days the two of us worked well together, combining illusions, invisibility, and stealth. He is a bit of a coward, but only when it comes to facing his wife, Matilda. Because of her, Henry has to smoke his pipe in secret. I think he should stand up to her, but he is my friend, and I would never betray his secret. Besides, I like a good pipe, too.
Matilda the White Lady: Here is the perfect example of why I never married. What a nag! She is a good fighter, but even in the old days she never gave me and Henry the credit we deserved.
Ada the Unbending: This young cleric is very pretty, for a human. She moved to the home last year to work on her memoirs. She was a judge for 30 years, and still hasn't gotten out of the habit of passing judgment. She passed judgment on me the moment we met. This adventure may make her rethink that, when she sees how well me and Henry work together.
Ratha Rann the Eagle-Eyed: This human just does not know when to slow down. He is constantly chasing after women a quarter his age. He was a very good adventuring companion, but the older he got, the more he chased after women.
Wemick the Wise: This old sage makes even me feel young. His mind seems to be going. In the old days, he was the smartest man I ever met, and I hope he will come through one more time.
Exeter: He was a very capable mage, although never as powerful as Wemick or Henry. He always had an inferiority complex. Fifteen years ago, he disappeared from the room he shared with Wemick. He's gone completely crackers, and now he's making threats.

The Living Galaxy

A Little Planet Looks Awfully Big Close Up: Part 2

by Roger E. Moore

Last month, the focus of this column was running role playing adventures on a single planet. Themes around which planet-based campaigns can be built were also described, and this month's column completes that list.

For an adventure to convince the players that their characters really *are* on another world, the planet must strike the characters as noticeably alien, different from other places they have visited. Notes were offered in this column in issue #58 on "alienizing" worlds and cultures by adding unique sensory descriptions and social events. The GM can work such details into the ongoing adventure, even during otherwise mundane game events, perhaps like so:

> "The steam train ride from the starport to the local capital, Nuevo Angeles, passes uneventfully. Unable to leave the passenger car while the train is in motion, you sit in your well-padded seats, listen to the rails clack and the wind roar by, and look out the windows at the endless fields of blue-green shrubs that stretch to the horizon. The enormous disk of Flame, the red-giant star around which this world's yellow sun revolves, spans the sky overhead; if you look up through the skylight in the passenger car and squint against the glare from the yellow afternoon sun, you can see dark splotches—sunspots larger than planets—slowly crossing the red giant's face.
>
> "As you relax, you listen to a sea of rapid-fire chatter in Old Terran Spanish, as the dark-haired and dark-complected locals discuss the latest news and their own experiences at the starport. Though everyone dresses in black as if they are heading for the same funeral, they seem quite relaxed and happy to be going home. Two reptilian Kronx across the aisle from you, probably tourists, are preoccupied with taking pictures of everything—the blue-green shrub fields, Flame, the floor of the railroad car, the locals, you, and even each other. You look at the Kronx and think of those ostrichlike dinosaurs you recall from Earth's paleontology books, only these are bright yellow and wear baggy gray shirts and kilts. The heavy odor of roasting meat, with a very strong but unidentifiable seasoning, warns you that lunch will be coming shortly. You hope the food doesn't burn your tongues the way breakfast did."

Whatever one-world adventure you set up for your group, do all you can to subtly emphasize its own peculiar differences. Assuming that the planet in question is somewhat Earthlike, focus on only a few differences at first, letting the players make easily managed changes to their already-familiar mental template of normal Earth life. An alien planet should ideally not be so alien that the players can't even imagine it, but not so familiar that it risks being unremarkable or boring. Give details, but not in a flood; don't drown the players. (This column in issue #59 also had information on planet-making in science fiction role playing games.)

In addition, keep the science-fiction flavor of the campaign. Avoid the appearance of outright magic unless such is allowed in your game's core rules. For example, Chaosium's *Thieves' World* boxed set provided *Traveller* game statistics for the people of the famed city of Sanctuary, described in a series of fantasy-fiction anthologies edited by Robert Asprin and Lynn Abbey. The magical abilities some of these characters possess were not detailed for *Traveller* games but were given a number of possible "scientific" explanations, including the use of quasi-magical psychic powers allowed in many science fiction games, such as the *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Star Wars*, *GURPS*, and STAR FRONTIERS® games. Magic also could be the result of godlike alien or human science, as per Clarke's Law ("Sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic"). Science-fantasy games like FASA's *Shadowrun* system get around this problem more easily by having a legitimate magic system built in, but this softens and dulls the nice hard-science edge that most science fiction games strive to maintain. Keep quasi-magical stuff rare.

Also, interpose bits of advanced technology among most barbaric trappings, hinting that the barbarians are either descended from an older, more advanced culture (as per TSR's GAMMA WORLD® game or the *Unnight* booklet for Steve Jackson Games' *GURPS* system) or have some trade with spacefaring crews and explorers (as per the notes on Logan's World in Games Workshop's *Warhammer 40,000: Rogue Trader* book). If nothing else, the ruins of the original colony ship or its shuttles might still be around.

Finally, weave the threads of the larger universe into smaller adventures and campaigns. A typical planet in the *Star Wars* game must surely have Imperial or Rebel sympathizers on it, if not whole outposts or military bases. And almost any world in the Shattered Imperium of the *MegaTraveller* game is likely to be tied up with the disintegration of the great human empire and the resulting horrors of conflict between many power-hungry factions. Not every adventure in either campaign should involve these themes, and some adventures may have nothing to do with the galaxy at large. Still, add the reminder that the rest of the universe is still there, waiting its turn to be explored and challenged.

More Of The Big Picture

Invasion

The characters are part of a military force charged with conquering a given world or land. Intense fighting, possibly using miniatures-combat rules if such are part of the game system, will become a major part of the campaign. Character casualties might be high, so back-up characters could be generated and kept on hand. This sort of campaign will not be to everyone's taste. This might prove too challenging for some players, since a knowledge of tactics and strategy can prove decisive. The GM will also have his hands full, as military maps must be made, forces on all sides must be outlined, and victory conditions must be set. If players like rolling lots of dice and having their characters shoot things, and if the GM

doesn't mind the workload, this could be the campaign for them.

Gaming examples: Almost any science fiction game with an active interstellar war should fit the bill, such as the following (some of which have extensive military sourcebooks):

- GDW's *MegaTraveller* game: The Shattered Imperium's power-politics campaign pits Imperial, Vilani, Solomani, Vargr, Aslan, and numerous other rebel and pirate forces against each other across thousands of worlds. In particular, see the *Rebellion Sourcebook* and *Hard Times*. The old *Traveller* game had the interesting Adventure 7, *Broadsword*.
- GDW's *2300 AD* game: The savage Kafer War involves multinational human forces against the alien Kafer in a conflict approaching genocidal proportions. The modules and sourcebooks describing the conflict on the planet Aurore are of key interest here, though they are geared more for a Defense campaign (which follows).
- West End Games' *Star Wars: The RPG:* Obviously, Empire vs. Rebel Alliance battles will dominate many gaming sessions here. The *Star Wars Miniatures Battles* book will be of great use to any group playing out an extensive military campaign and having access to miniature figures or cardboard cut-out/stand-ups.
- FASA's *Star Trek: The RPG:* Though wide-scale warfare is not present in most campaign set-ups in this game, there is every chance that a planetary war could crop up. Klingons, Romulans, and other traditional foes of the Federation might not be directly involved (though they might be backing one or more sides), and a civil war might not involve outside forces at all.
- FASA's *Renegade Legion: Legionnaire* game: As with the *MegaTraveller* and *Star Wars* games, battles between huge rival interstellar forces will dominate many adventures in this system—in this case being between the Terran Overlord Government (TOG) and the Renegade Legion.
- Leading Edge Games' *Aliens* system: Battles may erupt across dozens of worlds between Colonial Marines, colonists, corporate soldiers, and the monstrous Aliens, which could be spread to worlds by misguided ship crews, thus endangering whole populations.
- TSR's STAR FRONTIERS® game: The two Sathar Wars detailed in *Zebulon's Guide to the Frontier* and many of the game modules, particularly the Volturnus and Beyond the Frontier module trilogies, are perhaps the largest of many wars waged in the Frontier sector (the Corporate Wars are of interest here for their heavy use of espionage and carefully targeted violence).
- Any mecha-combat RPG would work fine in an Invasion campaign, including the *Robotech* (Palladium Books), *Mekton II* (R. Talsorian Games), and *BattleTech/MechWarrior* (FASA Corporation) systems. (Mecha are war machines from Japanese science fiction anime.) Each of these systems is founded on a background of severe interstellar conflict engulfing hundreds or thousands of worlds. Most *Robotech* battles are centered on a ruined, conquered Earth, but may be played out elsewhere. The *Roadstriker II* supplement for *Mekton II* has several planet-based adventures for that system, and *BattleTech* military supplements are many, some providing specific world adventures and battle set-ups.

In addition, most of the games mentioned in last month's column under "Exploration/Contact" work perfectly well in this type of campaign.

Extensive resource material for any Invasion campaign can be borrowed from a host of military role playing games. The near-future *Twilight: 2000* and *Merc: 2000* systems (GDW) are of interest if the GM adapts them to take place on a modern-tech colony world of Earth. The *Revised Recon* game (Palladium Books) could also be used, though both of these games and others like them might be best used only for supplying ideas for a "true" science fiction game campaign. Notes on military tactics, the historical progress of real wars (which may be duplicated and disguised for a science fiction game), and so on would be of interest to any GM with an Invasion mission for the characters to perform. In this light, the *Commando*-based supplements for the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game (TSR) would be useful, too.

SF resources: The science fiction book shelves are crowded with military invasion tales set on other worlds. The most famous examples include Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, Keith Laumer's *Bolo*, Gordon R. Dickson's Dorsai series, Jerry Pournelle's *The Mercenary*, Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, and David Drake's *Hammer's Slammers*. A number of anthologies of military science fiction also have been published, such as Jerry Pournelle's There Will Be War series and Gordon R. Dickson's *Combat SF*. And heaven forbid I should forget the three *Star Wars* movies.

Other resources: The historical sources a good GM can draw upon for ideas for an Invasion campaign are almost unlimited. Pick up one of the many oral histories or novelizations about action in World War II, the Korean and Vietnam wars, or the Persian Gulf war. Read about modern wars involving non-Western countries, such as those in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Dry collections of facts, graphs, and statistics are not your main goal; look for books giving personal stories of what modern combat is really like, and draw your ideas from there (you will have to mentally substitute lasers for M-16s and hovercraft for helicopters). Movies on modern warfare, such as *Apocalypse Now*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *The Guns of Navarone*, or *Patton*, should also provide ideas for NPCs and situations the player characters may face. Cold War-era action films, such as *Ice Station Zebra*, *Hell and High Water*, and *The Hunt for Red October*, only add to the suspense of a campaign involving a worldwide low-level conflict. Even Rambo films are of interest here.

Defense

The characters are part of a military force charged with defending their world from a military invasion or some other intelligently directed worldwide threat, such as another political power on their own world. Note the emphasis on an "intelligently directed" threat; a plague or other natural disaster does not usually present the PCs with a foe against whom they can directly struggle. Natural disasters are covered in the section "Disaster/Reconstruction."

Gaming examples: All the examples mentioned for Invasion apply here, too (see the note on Aurore for the *2300 AD* system). Double Adventure 5 *Chamax Plague/Horde*, for GDW's old *Traveller* game, is nicely adaptable to other science fiction systems, though it fits in the borderline category detailed later under "SF resources." The dead-but-soon-to-be-revived *Mechanoids* system (Palladium) was based on the Defense campaign premise. Note, too, that world defense also might be performed by covert intelligence and paramilitary agencies, bringing in the rules and supplements for the TOP SECRET/S.I. game, the *James Bond 007* system (Victory Games), and so forth for ideas. Of some interest as a resource is West End

Games' *The Price of Freedom* system, which takes place in an America conquered by the Soviets and other once-Communist nations. Just pretend it takes place on another planet, the U.S. is some other country, the invaders are from other nations, etc. The ideas work fine if you make substitutions.

SF resources: As noted previously, many science fiction books have been written about military campaigns on other worlds. Books detailing an invasion of one's home planet include Ursula K. LeGuin's *Rocannon's World*, Jack Vance's *The Last Castle* and *The Dragon Masters*, John Wyndham's *Out of the Deeps*, Keith Roberts's *The Furies*, Robert Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters*, Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven's *Footfall*, and Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (later produced as the movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*). One alien alone can constitute an invasion, as shown in either version of the movie *The Thing* (particularly the recent John Carpenter version). Some science fiction novels deal with revolutions in the heroes' home country, such as Jerry Pournelle's *Birth of Fire* or Robert Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*.

The grandfather of all such stories, of course, is H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, published in 1898. The 1953 movie version of *The War of the Worlds* offers some impressive and reasonably modern combat scenes, though they are rather one-sided in favor of the aliens. Tripod invaders appear in a striking trilogy by John Christopher, which includes the novels *The White Mountains*, *The City of Gold and Lead*, and *The Pool of Fire*. Finally, anyone who has read the H. G. Wells novel on interplanetary war should look for the April 1987 issue of *Omni* magazine, for Howard Waldrop's hilarious tale, *Night of the Cooters*, which details what happened when the Martians tried to invade Texas at the same time they were invading England.

In the borderline area ("borderline" because the invaders are more like animals than gun-toting aliens), we find the movies *Them!* and *Tremors*, which show battles between civilians and military forces against newly discovered monsters that are at least marginally intelligent. Any movie-rental store will have a handful of similar movies, some of them great and some of them awful, featuring "invasions" of mutants, smart chimps, giant rabbits, etc.

Other resources: Again, oral histories, novels, and movies about World War II and subsequent conflicts should offer much to the thoughtful GM. Look in particular for stories about resistance movements and guerilla actions, in which the people of a conquered nation fight back against their invaders. You might find the movie *Red Dawn* to be especially interesting, as it chronicles how a group of high-school students become freedom fighters after the United States is conquered by the Soviet Union and its allies. (Yes, I know, but just pretend that this is happening on some other Earthlike planet, the U.S. is really some other country, etc.) A number of military-oriented fiction series have covered past, present, and future wars, particularly the Vietnam conflict and hypothetical World War III events in the European theater.

Disaster/Reconstruction

Here, the characters are faced either with the task of surviving some monstrous natural cataclysm or with rebuilding their world-society following a major war or disaster. At the worst, PCs will start the campaign as barbarians, ignorant of their world's pre-disaster culture; at best, they will face grave problems in restoring even part of the social, military, and economic pillars on which the world's culture once rested.

Gaming examples: A number of science fiction and military game systems are concerned with postwar or post-holocaust survival, particularly the *Twilight: 2000* game (GDW), GAMMA WORLD® game (TSR), *Skyrealms of Jorune* game (Skyrealms Publishing), and *Aftermath* game (Fantasy Games Unlimited). Specific adventures for the *Twilight: 2000* game are the most usable. A worldwide Disaster or Reconstruction campaign can be constructed for almost any science fiction system. Two excellent examples of such worlds involve Aurore (*2300 AD* game) and Unnight (*GURPS Space* game, from Steve Jackson Games). The latter world regressed following a botched colonization effort and is unique and striking in its design; check it out.

SF resources: If science fiction does anything well, it comes up with creative worldwide disasters. This column, in POLYHEDRON® Newszine #59, gave some examples of "disaster worlds" from recent science fiction literature, and there are many more, such as Andre Norton's *Daybreak—2250 A.D.*, Fritz Leiber's *The Wanderer*, Brian Aldiss's *Greybeard* and *Barefoot in the Head*, and the duet of *When Worlds Collide* and *After Worlds Collide*, by Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie. Many high-school students may recall Stephen Vincent Benét's short story, "The Place of the Gods," also in this vein. Movies like *Meteor*, *Crack in the World*, *The Day of the Triffids*, *The Night of the Comet*, *Mad Max*, *The Road Warrior*, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, *The Omega Man*, and especially *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* are also helpful.

Post-atomic-war disaster fiction is also widespread, including great tales like *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, by Walter M. Miller, Jr.; *On the Beach*, by Nevil Shute; *Alas, Babylon*, by Pat Frank; *Hiero's Journey*, by Sterling Lanier; *Malevil*, by Robert Merle; and *Tomorrow!* and similar novels by Philip Wylie. Movies of interest include *Panic in the Year Zero*, *Testament*, *The Day After*, and the eerie *Miracle Mile*. (As a side note, I watched several of these films in one evening and was horribly depressed; keep your dosage level low.)

Other resources: I still recall the issues of *National Geographic* magazine that showed pictures of the great 1964 Alaskan earthquake and the recent Mount St. Helens eruption. Two excellent books on particular natural disasters include *The New Madrid Earthquakes*, by James Lal Penick, Jr. (covering the gigantic earthquakes of 1811-1812 in the midwestern U.S., suitable for adapting to a lightly colonized planet), and *The Day the World Ended*, by Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts (describing the 1902 eruption of Mount Pelée, on Martinique). Plague, volcanoes, warfare, drought, crop failure, meteorite strikes, floods, fires, hurricanes, tornados, and a host of other calamities have been chronicled in books, magazines, and films, especially in recent years when films like *Earthquake* were popular. This column in issue #68 named a few other books you might want to examine for nonfictional disaster-scenario ideas. Even flipping through an old Civil Defense fallout-shelter handbook could provide some interesting (if unpleasant) ideas for mean, cruel GMs.

Next month, we'll look at using a homeworld campaign base for science fiction adventures—and show how the categories in this and the last issue fit in. See you then.

❑

Into the Dark

The Leotard Brigade

by James Lowder

The daring deeds of superheroes have been a staple of fantasy films since the late 30s and early 40s, when do-gooders such as Superman and Captain America first pummeled their way into American pop culture. The superhero film tide ebbs and flows: in the 40s, dozens of masked vigilantes made their screen debuts in cliffhanger serials from B-grade studios like Republic and Mascot. In the 60s, filmmakers couldn't decide if the public wanted relevant heroes, like Marvel's Spider-Man or DC's Green Arrow/Green Lantern team, or the goofy, over-the-top camp of Batman or the Legion of Superheroes. Most opted for the latter, but unusual superhero films like *Judex* also made it to the screen.

Since the 70s and the success of the sharp, professional Superman films (the first two, anyway), superhero flicks have become big-budget favorites. This isn't to say dozens of studios aren't still cranking out cheap made-for-television jokes—like *Dr. Strange*, *Wonder Woman*, and *Dr. Scorpion*. Still, the expectations for a top of the line superhero film have been high of late, especially after Tim Burton's *Batman*.

Over the next few issues, we'll be covering a broad range of superhero films, some derived from comic book characters, others from pulp fiction. So strap on your domino mask and dust off your jet pack.

You can't get any better	*****
Entertaining and enjoyable	****
There are worse films	***
Wait for cable	**
A waste of good tape	*

Spy Smasher

1942, Approx. 210 Minutes
Republic
Director: William Witney
Cast: Kane Richmond, Marquerite Chapman, Hans Schumm, Tristram Coffin
***

After their very successful serial featuring Captain Marvel, Republic Studios optioned the second most popular character from *Whiz Comics*, Spy Smasher. Like most heroes born in the midst of World War II, Spy Smasher was devoted to countering foreign threats to the United States. In this particular 12-chapter serial, our hero is concerned with foiling the nefarious schemes of the Mask, a German agent who tries various things to undermine the American economy and defense effort.

During the course of the adventure, Spy Smasher dashes a plot to smuggle counterfeit money into the States, helps to destroy the secret Nazi "Bat-Plane," breaks up a ring of thieves stealing mines meant for Britain, and recovers gold bullion the Mask swiped before it could be used to pay for American military aid to Europe.

Like all cliffhanger serials, all but the last chapter of *Spy Smasher* end with the hero in some dire predicament. Since these serials were shown one episode per week, you had to go to the theater the following Saturday to see how the hero escaped. The best trap in this series occurs in episode one, where Spy Smasher is caught on a mine car in an underground tunnel, with a huge ball of fire racing toward him from behind and the only exit blocked before him.

While not the best serial ever made, *Spy Smasher* has its moments. The opening few chapters are great, but the whole story bogs down in the middle, reaching a low point in chapter 10, where we are subjected to the type of endless car chases usually reserved for Sylvester Stallone movies. The stunts during the numerous fistfights are incredibly athletic. As the hero, Kane Richmond is dashing and likeable; he went on to star in a few other cliffhangers, including *Haunted Harbor*, *Brick Bradford*, and *The Lost City*, which is often razzed as the worst sound serial ever.

Spy Smasher, like many successful serials, was compiled into a feature-length film. This version is called *Spy Smasher Returns* and runs a little over an hour and a half. After World War II, Spy Smasher found himself without many foreign agents to beat senseless, so he refocused his attention and became Crime Smasher.

Batman

1989, 126 Minutes
Warner Brothers
Director: Tim Burton
Cast: Jack Nicholson, Michael Keaton, Kim Bassinger
***1/2

This film should work, but doesn't. Oh, I like it well enough, and there are a few scenes in *Batman* I consider among the most impressive in all the superhero subgenre. Michael Keaton silenced the doubts of hardcore comic fans with his strong performance as the Dark Knight. Nicholson was simply brilliant as the Joker. The supporting cast included such talented character actors as Michael Gough, Billy Dee Williams, and Jack Palance. The soundtrack by Danny Elfman was as dark and brooding as Tim Burton's direction.

So why is the film so tedious after the first hour?

Actually, the reason is pretty clear, right from the opening credits. From the start, no one could convince themselves to tell a story about Batman and not the Joker. Nicholson gets top billing, and his character gets more attention in the script. Sure, the scenes with the Clown Prince of Crime plugging Jack Palance are great, but no one seems to notice that the best explanation the audience gets for Bruce Wayne's alter-ego is: "This is something I have to do . . . because no one else can." Right, Bruce. Crystal clear.

As with *Beetlejuice* and *Edward Scissorhands*, Burton has trouble bringing this film to a dramatic close. The epilogue, with Batman posed atop the building is stunning, but the endless, rather ridiculous fight in the belltower is quite a let-down. After all, where did all those thugs come from if the falling bell blocked the stairs?

The movie is filled with dozens of sloppy continuity errors like that. I've heard rumors that the film was hacked up in final editing because it ran way too long, that the scenes explaining why Bruce Wayne dresses up in body armor to fight crime were all trashed at the last minute. The film certainly shows signs of that sort of hacking. Alas, we may never know if the rumors are

true—unless Warner decides it can make a buck off releasing the uncut film.

Batman is certainly an entertaining film, with some great scenes mixed in with the bland ones. However, it does not deserve the praise or the money it raked in. I'll go see *Batman Returns* this summer, but only in hopes we'll get to see more of Keaton's Batman than we do of DeVito's Penguin.

Darkman

1991, 96 Minutes
Universal
Director: Sam Raimi
Cast: Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand, Larry Drake, Colin Friels
****

In many ways, this is the film *Batman* should have been.

Doctor Peyton Westlake (Liam Neeson) is a scientist experimenting with synthetic skin. When his journalist girlfriend runs afoul of a ruthless businessman (Colin Friels) because of an incriminating memo she possesses, Westlake gets caught in the crossfire. The businessman's thugs pay a visit to the good doctor, who unwittingly holds the memo. In the resulting lab explosion, Westlake is scarred beyond belief. Using synthetic skin to create a multitude of disguises, he wages a war against the villains. The only problem is, the skin is photosensitive; unless it stays in the dark, it deteriorates into bubbling goo after 99 minutes.

Neeson makes a wonderfully deranged hero, easily matching the nastiness dished out by the amoral businessman and his finger-collecting enforcer (played by Larry Drake of "L.A. Law"). The score, once again by Danny Elfman, is far too derivative of the one he composed for *Batman*. The film's conclusion is also uncomfortably similar to *Batman*'s, with Darkman facing off against the baddie atop a partially completed skyscraper. It seems to be a rule of late that villains must plummet at least three storeys to their doom at the end of fantasy and horror films.

Where *Darkman* distinguishes itself from the film version of DC's Dark Knight is in its theme. Raimi, whose other projects include the *Evil Dead* series, makes sure the audience sees the character development Westlake is forced to undergo; the finale of the film shows us clearly that one cannot wear a mask for too long without being changed by it.

Raimi's sometimes gonzo filmmaking only enlivens *Darkman* in places, almost as if he were afraid of frightening off the mainstream audience the film was certain to attract. Still, we get a point-of-view shot from a flying rivet and a couple of really striking uses of camera angle. The most unusual and unsettling scene occurs in a fair, when Westlake/Darkman tries to win his girl a stuffed pink elephant. You'll know what I mean when you see it.

When it was in theaters, *Darkman* was lucky enough to have some of the sharpest promotional trailers I've seen, with wonderful voice-over narration. The best went something like: "Even in the darkest night, there's a light that shines on every man—but one." For once, the ad copy did justice to an exciting and worthwhile film.

The Punisher

1989, 88 Minutes
New World
Director: Mark Goldblatt
Cast: Dolph Lundgren, Louis Gossett Jr., Jeroen Krabbe, Kim Myori
***1/2**

Speaking of exciting and worthwhile . . . Oops, wrong film. This is the review of *The Punisher*, isn't it?

Speaking of excruciatingly dull and worthless (that's better), we have this feeble attempt to bring Marvel's macho hero to video stores across the country. As the Punisher—minus his Vietnam experience, Marine training, and death's head costume—Dolph Lundgren shows all the thespian skills of a toppled fencepost. His emotional range extends from pouting his lower lip when he empties yet another clip of ammo to staring blankly at anyone who tries to hold a conversation with him.

After his family is killed by gangsters, Frank Castle becomes a self-proclaimed force for justice. But after he decimates the Italian-American mob's army, the Yakuza moves in, taking children hostage and demanding a majority of the gang's profit. The Punisher—and the film—quickly become proponents of Japanese bashing. After all, we can't have the Yakuza beating up on those American crooks, can we?

Pretty loathsome stuff, filled with senseless violence and even more senseless actors. Only Louis Gossett Jr. makes a go of this dreadful film, proving once again that he is a talented performer even if he has no sense for scripts.

With the absolutely terrible showing Marvel-licensed films have been making of late, I've begun to wonder if even James "Terminator" Cameron can pull off a hit with his proposed film version of Spider-Man. In fact, even if Hitchcock and Welles rose from the grave to direct an X-Men movie, I'd have my doubts. Anyone up for a double-feature of *Captain America* and *Howard the Duck*?

Blind Fury

1990, 90 Minutes
Tri-Star/RCA
Director: Phillip Noyce
Cast: Rutger Hauer, Terry O'Quinn, Noble Willingham
****

I wouldn't normally consider this a superhero film, but as someone noted, it shows that Marvel might be able to put an interesting Daredevil film together. Keeping the comments from the end of my review of *The Punisher* in mind, I'd have to agree.

Blind Fury is based upon—or, to be more accurate, ripped off from—Japanese samurai films featuring the blind heroes Zato Ichi and the Crimson Bat. In this Americanized version, Rutger Hauer plays Nick Parker, Vietnam veteran who was blinded by a mortar shell explosion, then captured by locals in the jungle. They help him to survive by teaching him to work around his blindness. They also teach him how to fight like a master with his sword-cane.

When Parker returns to the States, he gets caught up in a battle between an old army buddy (played ably by Terry O'Quinn) and a scummy casino owner in Reno. Lots of swordplay and some good character work by Hauer make the film work as well as it does. The humor is pretty lame, and the villains are brainless enough to fall into all the traps the blind swordsman sets. One irredeemably dumb scene in particular, where Parker reveals cheating in the casino, should be cut out of all prints of *Blind Fury* and burned.

In all, an amiable enough way to spend an evening, but only if you can't get your hands on the Japanese originals. ❑

Of Masks And Men

Magic Items For The AD&D® 2nd Edition Game

by Douglas Haile

"'. . . and there it was, the Mask of Lycanthus!'" Markus gasped, as he recounted his band's most recent adventure. "We had searched long and hard for it, braved many dangers. And now it was within our reach."

"But why risk your life for a mask? What does it do?" posed one of the younger men listening to the tale.

"What does it do?" Markus repeated loudly. "I'll tell you."

Cultures such as the Aztecs and Egyptians once believed masks represented a way to change a person into someone or something else.

The concept was that if the outside appearance of a person changed, then the person was changed—becoming the man, creature, or spirit the mask represented.

Below are some magical masks that can be used in AD&D® game campaigns. With a little work they can be used in other fantasy role playing games.

Mask of Light

This clerical mask is carved in the likeness of a man or woman with very fine features and a contented expression. When the correct command is given, the mask's eyes shoot forth 20'-long beams of bright light that inflict 3d4 points of damage to neutrally-aligned creatures. The beams, which are one inch in diameter, cause 6d4 points of damage to evil creatures, and cause no damage to good creatures. The beams can be used five times a day, once a round; they automatically hit any single creature. In addition to its destructive power, the mask bestows infravision of 60' and acts as a *gem of seeing* five times a day, each use lasts three rounds.

The mask is lawful good, and any character donning it must save vs. spell or immediately convert to the mask's alignment. The mask functions best when worn by clerics. Non-clerics using the mask only gain the infravision ability. GP sale value 36,000. XP Value 1,500.

Mask of Night

This clerical mask has the visage of a beautiful person whose features are marred by a baleful expression. When commanded, the eyes emit beams of purest ebony that are 20' long and one inch in diameter. The beams inflict 3d4 points of damage to neutral and evil creatures, and 6d4 points of damage to good creatures. The beams can be used five times a day, once a round. They automatically hit any single target.

The mask is lawful evil, and any character donning it must save vs. spell or convert to the mask's alignment. The mask also grants its wearer infravision to 60' and acts as a *Gem of Seeing* five times a day, each use lasts three rounds. Non-clerics wearing the mask gain only the infravision ability. GP sale value 36,000. XP Value 1,500.

Mask of Twilight

The face represented on this clerical mask appears stoic and aloof. When commanded, the eyes send forth gray beams of that are 24' long and one inch in diameter. The beams can strike only one creature of any alignment each round, inflicting 3d4 + 2 points of damage; they hit automatically. The beams can be used five times a day.

The mask is lawful neutral, and any character wearing it must save vs. spell or convert to the mask's alignment. The mask also grants infravision to 60'. It can function as a *gem of seeing* up to 10 times a day, each use lasts three rounds. Non-clerics wearing the mask gain only the infravision ability. GP sale value 36,000. XP Value 1,500.

Mask of Combat

These masks carry the images of warriors. The face is scarred and weathered. Fighters donning a *mask of combat* receive a +2 bonus to their THAC0s and saving throws. They do not gain increased hit points or proficiencies. Characters of other classes wearing such a mask gain the THAC0 of a fighter of their level instead of the THAC0 of their class. Each day the mask functions once for as many turns as the character has levels. For example, a sixth-level character can use the mask for six turns. GP sale value 33,000. XP Value 3,000.

Mask of Stealth

These masks bear the features of shifty individuals. They are often missing an eye, have an eye patch, or have broken teeth. Thieves who wear a *mask of stealth* raise their abilities by 10% (maximum 99%). Characters of other classes gain the average abilities (see DMG, page 23) of a thief of their own level. For example, a fourth level priest who uses the mask also is treated as a fourth level thief. A *mask of stealth* operates for as many hours per week as the character has levels. GP sale value 33,000. XP Value 3,000.

Mask of Trickery

These masks are carved to resemble studious scholars. When a command word is uttered, they allow a character of any class to cast spells from the School of Illusion. The number of spells that can be cast each day is equal to the level of the character wearing the mask. Illusionists who don the mask are given no special abilities, however, they gain the additional spells. The spells available are determined by the DM, and all spells are cast as if the character were a sixth level illusionist. GP sale value 50,000. XP Value 5,000.

Mask of Knowledge

Similar to a *mask of trickery*, a *mask of knowledge* bestows spells from a particular magical school—other than the school of illusion. Thus, one character might seek to have several *masks of knowledge*. The masks grant a number of spells a day equal to the level of the character wearing the mask. The spells available are determined by the DM, and all spells are cast as if the character were a sixth level wizard. GP sale value 50,000. XP Value 5,000.

Monster Masks

These masks are carved to represent the faces of humanoid monsters. For example, some masks bear the visages of gnolls, orcs, hobgoblins, lizardmen, and the like. By wearing the mask and speaking the command word, a character is transformed into that monster—gaining the monster's armor class, hit dice, hit points, and other abilities. The character cannot access his own abilities or proficiencies, but he retains his identity. A *monster mask* can be used by any class. It functions once a day for 1d4 turns. GP sale value 12,500. XP Value 2,000.

Mask of the Wraith

This particularly horrid-looking *monster mask* grants the wearer the abilities of a wraith. This includes the armor class and the chilling touch that inflicts 1d6 points of damage and drains one level. The character retains his original hit points and only can be hit by silver or magical weapons.

A *mask of the wraith* typically has 10d4 charges, with each charge giving the wearer the abilities of a wraith for 4d4 rounds. These masks cannot be recharged. GP sale value 12,500. XP Value 2,000.

Mask of Disguise

This mask is prized by thieves and spies. When the command word is spoken, the wearer can change his appearance. However, his height and weight cannot be altered. A change can be as minute as switching the color of his eyes or lengthening his nose. Or, it can encompass a change in hair color, voice quality, facial structure, and can even make the wearer appear as someone of the opposite sex.

A *mask of disguise* usually is found with 10d4 charges. Each change, no matter how simple or complex, expends one charge. The new visage lasts until another charge is expended to return the wearer to his original appearance. These masks can be recharged. (The wearer must return to his original ap-

pearance before assuming a new one.) GP sale value 15,000. XP Value 3,500.

Mask of Attractiveness

These are half-masks, covering only the eyes and nose of the wearer. They are usually found in bright colors, and they are often edged with pearls or rhinestones. When the command word is spoken, a character who wears a *mask of attractiveness* gains a +3 to his or her Charisma score with respect to the opposite sex. The mask functions once per day, granting the increased Charisma score for 1d12 hours. GP sale value 10,000. XP Value 1,000.

Mask of Jealousy

When the command word is spoken, this mask also gives the wearer a +3 Charisma score bonus with respect to characters of the opposite sex. However, the wearer's Charisma score is lowered by 4 to characters of the same sex. The mask functions once per day, granting the altered Charisma scores for 1d6 hours. GP sale value 10,000. XP Value 500.

Mask of Lycanthus

Although multiple masks of the other various types are known to exist. There is only one *mask of Lycanthus*. When donned, the mask becomes invisible so the wearer's true face is seen. The mask turns the wearer into a werebear, and the wearer is fully able to control the changes between his natural form and bear form.

The *mask of Lycanthus* permits the wearer to change shape six times a day. Returning to the wearer's original form counts as a change. The mask can be removed by speaking a second command word. GP sale value 15,000. XP Value 3,500. ❑

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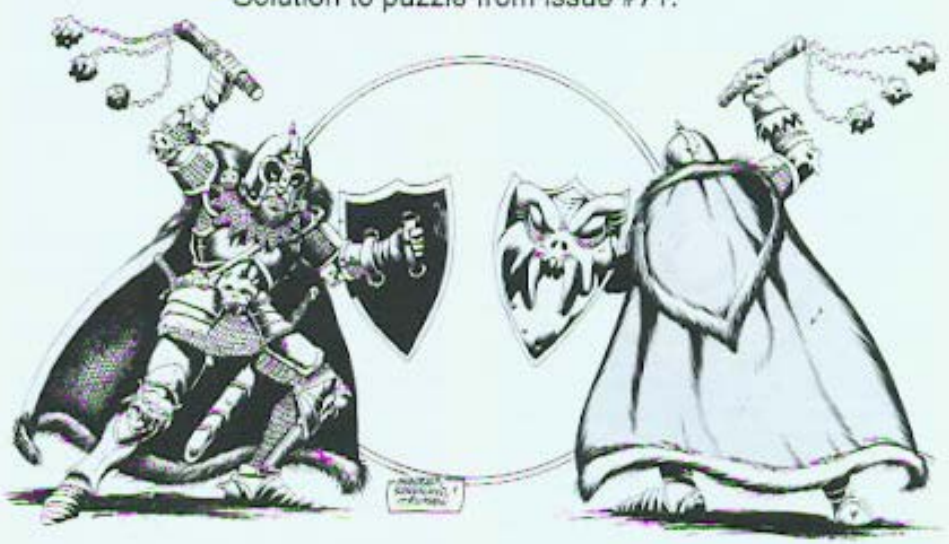
Solution to puzzle from issue #71.



Everwinking Eye

The Tears Of The Dragon

by Ed Greenwood

"And all that night the dragon cried,
As o'er the rooftops she soared and beat,
For one mage lost to her when he died
One heart stilled; one was torn yet beat."
Anonymous,
The Dragon Cried
Ballad of The Vast

Adventurers still search the Vast today—all the great sweep and stretch of it—because of that dragon who wept long ago.

The Fall of Archveult

Some 70 winters ago, the archmage Archveult "Tattercloak" vanished in a spectacular midair explosion in the dawn sky over the Ravens Bluff harbor. The blast ended the wizard's short but savage battle with a gigantic dragon. Some say it was a cinnamon dragon. Others claim it was an unknown breed, never seen before or since—whose command of magic rivalled Archveult's own. The explosion apparently destroyed them both (though some sages argue it may only have cloaked their violent shifting to another plane). Whatever befell, Archveult Tattercloak was seen no more in the Realms.

The sun rose that day over a frightened and awed Ravens Bluff. Merchants and warriors alike muttered and cast anxious glances skyward. Archveult was known to live with a powerful gold dragon, Tlanchass "Hailstorm." While in his company, Tlanchass often took the shape of a beautiful human woman, and many said they loved each other deeply.

Whatever the truth, it is certain that Tlanchass came out of the east to the scene of Archveult's fall in dragon shape, large and terrible in her rushing flight. She swooped and quested over the city frantically, while folk of the city cowered in their cellars. Her search fruitless, she gave a great sad cry.

All the rest of that day, the distraught dragon flew about, weeping. Her tears blazed down out of the sky like fire, and where they came to ground, they sparkled and gleamed, diamond-bright.

When dusk came, the dragon flew away westward, never to be seen again.

Behind, on the streets of Ravens Bluff, her tears glittered and shone. They had become hard and clear like gems, smooth-sided, retaining their teardrop shapes. Men gathered them, wonderingly, for it was like gathering starlight. They were quite the most beautiful gems ever seen. Hard they were, too hard for blade to scratch or hammer to shatter. And news of the gems of grief spread through the city like fire.

All the next day, men admired them, fought over them, and hid them away. Sorcerers and priests studied them. All the next night that followed, gargoyles came out of the dark windows of the fell tower of Muaralygrym the Mage, the sorcerer with the darkest reputation in the city. The gargoyles glided through the city with their eyes of burning flame searching for the tears. Their unnatural claws rended doors and thatched roofs in pursuit of the gems. The people of Ravens Bluff believed the evil wizard had worked a spell that revealed the location of the precious tears—for his murderous creatures left not a tear behind when they rose from the city streets, claws dripping blood.

When the angry townsfolk stormed Muaralygrym's tower the next day, they found it open, unguarded and empty. The tears were gone, along with every work and copper coin of Muaralygrym the Mage.

A mighty wizard of those times, Lauthdryn "Hurler-of-Stars," was then The Magister. Called upon by lesser wizards of Ravens Bluff, Lauthdryn revealed that Archveult's seat of power had lain in The Vast "in a low place, not a high place." Further, The Magister said that Muaralygrym had used great Art to hide himself—spells so twisted that their trace had not yet faded. Those traces disclosed to The Magister that Muaralygrym the Dark was himself still in The Vast.

Lauthdryn went alone into the lands east of the city, naked power crackling and crawling across the staff he intended to use to bring Muaralygrym to justice. In the morning the ground shook and pieces of that shattered staff fell from thin air to the streets of the city—Muaralygrym had won.

Many days later, a sad-eyed and bent old sorcerer arrived in Ravens Bluff. He gave his name as Aralagath Tarsil of Elturel—and now The Magister. He told the folk of the Living City that Lauthdryn had spent his life in the breaking of Muaralygrym's power, and that both the former Magister and Muaralygrym had perished "somewhere near, between thy walls and the watching mountains." Aralagath then departed and was not seen again.

From that day to this, adventurers have searched The Vast for the abandoned hoard of the dragon Tlanchass, and her gathered Tears.

The Lost Hoard

Tlanchass and Archveult dwelt together in a network of great caverns that accommodated the dragon's form. The gold one often bathed in the shallow waters that floored that place. Sages learned that the caverns were reached through the floor of a simple stone cottage in a wooded dell somewhere in The Vast. But the location of that cottage is a mystery.

If any have found it, or the great wealth of gathered gold, gems, and Archveult's magic said to lie hidden there, no word has come of it. Archveult devised many spells, and was known to own powerful magic staves, rings, and more strange things of Art.

The Tears of the Dragon

It is not known what magical powers the dragon Tlanchass commanded, or even what became of her, though Elminster has hinted rather strongly that she went to Evermeet, where she may yet dwell. No other dragon has created what she did in her grief. No mortal magic can duplicate or recreate a *tear.*

A *tear of the dragon* is a hand-sized, teardrop-shaped clear stone that is silky to the touch. No known force can mark it or shatter it. It gathers light and stores it, emitting a soft mint-green *faerie fire* at all times. If struck or dropped, a tear makes a ringing sound so sad that all who hear it are moved to tears.

A *tear of the dragon* is known to hold certain magical qualities. Its touch heals insanity and damage to the mind;

cures disease, including lycanthropy and mummyrot; banishes scarring and disfigurement; ends *charms, feeblemindedness*, and other mental influences, including *geas* and *quest* magics. It also heals 2d12 lost hit points. These powers work with each contact.

A *tear* can also aid a touched being as follows. Once every ride (10 days): it will act as a *potion of vitality*.. Once a year it can act as a *commune* spell, allowing the one touching it to contact their deity and receive 1d4 + 1 answers.

Any creature who carries such a stone is protected against life energy draining and possession, such as attacks by the user of a *magic jar* spell, and against shock (i.e. System Shock survival rolls automatically succeed).

It is thought that there were once 70-odd *tears*; no one knows how many survive. GP sale value (estimated) 150,000. XP Value 15,000.

The Search

Many companies of adventurers, in the years since The Grief of Tlanchass, have searched all over The Vast for traces of The Lost Hoard and the *tears of the dragon.*

The companies found several sinister things: tombs of powerful undead that someone, or something, was visiting regularly and keeping clean; and old ruins that someone, or something, had recently supplied with a resident Deepspawn (a horrific monster detailed in *FR11/Dwarves Deep*).

Other disquieting things, too, have begun to occur: orcs and worse have come down out of the mountains and taken to hunting adventurers! The Vast seems to have become an increasingly dangerous place, particularly since some heroes have discovered entryways to long-forgotten networks of underground caverns that were evidently used by the dwarves of old—and now the orcs who came after them.

Evil young mages from lands such as Thay have been making pilgrimages to The Vast. Perhaps they seek the *tears* or Archveult's magic, or perhaps they come to meet with some as-yet-unrevealed dark power or deity.

As the old dwarven adventurer Guldaeth Grimshield of Highbank Forest once said, "Come one, come all, here to The Vast. All the killing's happening here, and the next handful of dooms to befall us all are a-hatching here."

With this in mind, we've provided the accompanying map of the lands around Ravens Bluff, for the inspiration and information of all interested players and Dungeon Masters.

The Vast

The lands on the eastern shore of the Dragon Reach, as far inland as the mountain ranges known here as the Earthfast Mountains, there as the Giant Spikes, and over there as the Earthspur Mountains, are known as "The Vast."

The Vast is the hinterland of Ravens Bluff, the territory thrown open for RPGA™ Network members to explore. So far, a tour of this area has been presented in *LC2/Inside Ravens Bluff*, and certain locales within it have been surveyed in *Everwinking Eye* columns.

The Vast is dominated by four cities: Calaunt, Procampur, Ravens Bluff, and Tantras. The first two cities are detailed in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures* hardcover sourcebook, and the last one is featured in the module *FRE2/Tantras*. Ravens Bluff, of course, continues to be detailed in depth in the LC series of modules and in the pages of this Newszine. ❑

With Great Power

Continued from page 2

Mental Skills tables, and all starred talents cost 10 CPs each. All other skills cost 5 CPs each (buying Chemistry costs 5 CPs, while the Medicine or the Guns skill would cost 10 CPs each). Subtract all CPs spent here to get your hero's new CP total.

Contacts: Unless the GM specifies otherwise, each contact costs 5 CPs. Don't detail each contact now, as contacts often work best when chosen during an adventure *with the GM's O.K.*

Fill in the blanks

There, you're done. If you have any CPs left over, it's up to the GM what you can do with them. I suggest simply adding them to your hero's Karma points. Beginning heroes often don't have much Karma to spend on their first adventures. Don't forget to modify your hero as per the origin you picked for him earlier, and round out your hero with his heroic and character names, background, job, costume, how he gained his powers, why he risks his life as a hero, etc.

Character advancement

All normal game rules on character advancement apply. Character Points are used only during a hero's creation and do not apply to the character's future advancement. For example, you cannot pay 10 CPs for a power and not buy a rank for it during the hero's creation.

GM-imposed Limits

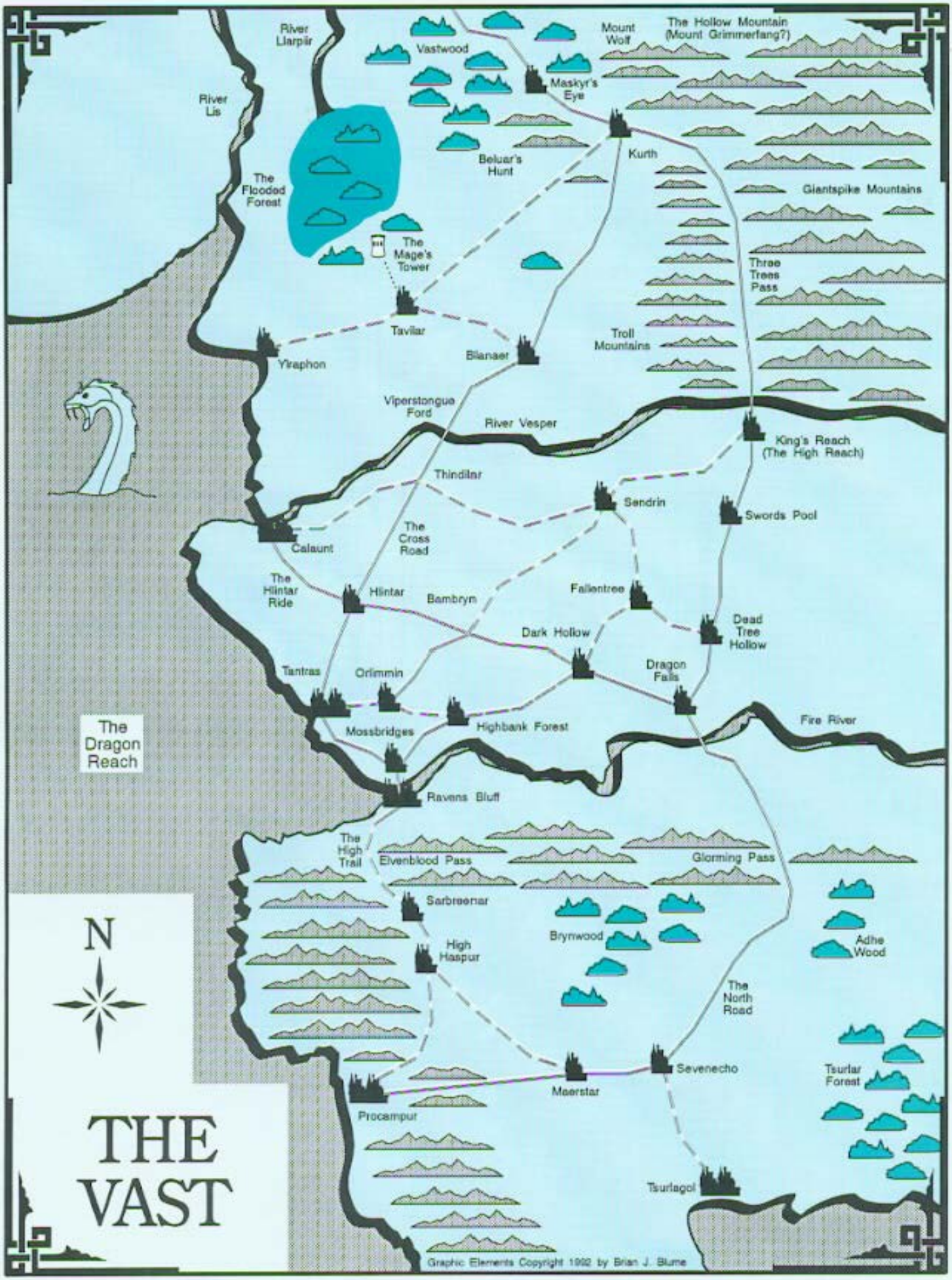
Test this system by creating several characters. You'll realize then, if you haven't already, that the system is flexible and can be abused unless the GM lays down some guidelines. The GM could impose spending limits on primary abilities (no FASERIP scores above Amazing (50), for example), powers (such as no more than four total), power ranks (no power ranks above Incredible (45)), power limitations (one limitation only, no limitation ranks above Incredible), and even the number of talents and contacts.

Breaking down Marvel characters by using this system can give GMs a good idea on what limits to place on character generation for their campaigns. Using the characters listed in the *Advanced Set* Judge's Book for example, Invisible Woman, Marvel Girl, and Wasp each add up to about 300 CPs. Spider-Man, Thing, and Vindicator (Heather Hudson) each add up to between 450 and 500 CPs. Magneto adds up to almost 700 CPs.

Discuss with your players the kind of campaign you want to have and then experiment with different point totals before deciding how many CPs to give your players. For Avengers-style campaigns, I'd suggest 300-350 CPs per hero. For low-powered, gritty, "realistic," or pulp campaigns, I'd give out about 200 CPs. If you want to play a high-powered or cosmic campaign, I recommend handing out at least 500 CPs.

This system also allows GMs to build customized villains. By tailoring the number of CPs each villain is built with, a GM can gain a good handle on how well the villain should perform against the heroes. (For example, three 500-CP miscreants, 1500 CPs total, should do pretty well against five 300-CP heroes, despite being outnumbered.)

Next time, I'll continue to discuss PC heroes, including examples of building heroes with this system. Try this system, then write me and give me your impressions. ❑


River Llarpir
River Lis
Vastwood
Mount Wolf
The Hollow Mountain (Mount Grimmerfang?)
Maskyr's Eye
Kurth
Beluar's Hunt
The Flooded Forest
Giantspike Mountains
The Mage's Tower
Three Trees Pass
Tavilar
Troll Mountains
Bilanaer
Yraphon
Viperstongue Ford
River Vesper
King's Reach (The High Reach)
Thindilar
Sandrin
Swords Pool
The Cross Road
Calaunt
The Hlintar Ride
Hlintar
Bambryn
Fallentree
Dead Tree Hollow
Dark Hollow
Tantras
Orlimmin
Dragon Falls
Highbank Forest
Fire River
Mossbridges
The Dragon Reach
Ravens Bluff
The High Trail
Elvenblood Pass
Glorming Pass
Sarbreenar
Brynwood
Adhe Wood
High Haspur
The North Road
Sevenecho
Tsurlar Forest
Meerstar
Procampur
Tsurlagol
N
THE VAST
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AND YOU KNOW HOW HE LOVES MY MAW'S COOKING....
YES, YOUR MOTHER IS A WONDERFUL COOK....
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO MR SHADOWHOG! I'M JUST WORRIED SICK!

I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT IF I WERE YOU. CHANCES ARE HE'S JUST OUT ON ONE OF HIS LITTLE ADVENTURES AND HAS JUST LOST TRACK OF THE TIME!

UNFORTUNATELY I DIDN'T LOOK AT THE DIRECTIONAL INDICATOR! I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHAT PLANET WE'RE ON!
WHOA! SUM RITE BIG CRITTERS RUNNIN' 'ROUND OUT HYAR!

HEY KID! DIDJA EVER FIND DAT UNCLE O' YOURS?
NO. NOT YET FELIX! I SURE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHERE HE'S GOTTEN OFF TO!!
BLOODMOOSE WUZ HYAR